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SATCHEL SERIES.

Mrs. Singleton.

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MRS. SINGLETON.

By Mrs. Cornelia S. Barclay.

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MRS. SINGLETON.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a mild soft evening towards the latter end of May, and Doctor Langdon and his son Reuben sat on the porch of their cottage, watching for the carriage that was to bring Mr. and Mrs. Singleton to their home.

Mr. Singleton had been spending the first year of his wedded life abroad, but had suddenly been recalled by the death of his father, which had now left him sole heir and proprietor of a beautiful home on the Hudson. Not far from his residence lived Doctor Langdon, a physician of some standing, who had lately retired from practice in consequence of declining years and ill health, brought on by exposure and anxiety, attending his profession, or as a homeopathist would say, 'over-dosing.'

He had saved but little, and barely could have eked out a subsistence, had it not been for his married daughter, and her husband, deciding to take up their abode in his humble cottage; and by thus adding their means to

his, he managed to live tranquilly, and happily, but without any of the luxuries or indulgencies of life.

Young Reuben had received one of the best educations at Oxford, England where he had been sent and adopted when quite a child by his father's younger brother.

With reason great hopes had been entertained as to his future prospects; for his uncle possessing a large fortune, had on more than one occasion intimated his generous intentions towards him.

Doctor Langdon, had known Mrs. Singleton in her early childhood, and on the evening of their arrival, had prepared a basket of rare and valuable plants, which she had often expressed a desire to have, and Reuben, who was visiting his father's home for a few weeks, previous to his return again to England begged to be the bearer of them, thus securing an opportunity he had long desired of meeting one whose beauty and grace he had so often heard extolled.

"Do you see them coming, Reuben?" inquired his father.

"Not yet. We must not look for them until near six, and it is scarcely that. We can no more than bow, and wave our handkerchiefs as they drive by. There they are now! Wave quickly, father, or they will be out of sight in a moment."

That passing glance disclosed to Reuben one of the sweetest smiles and faces he had ever seen.

"Are you sure, father, these are choice specimens, and not within the reach of every ordinary gardener?" said Reuben, taking up the basket and examining the contents. "It strikes me it is a rough-looking collection to present as a welcome. In blooming flowers now there is more sentiment."

"I see more sentiment in a gift that yearly blooms, Reuben, and should prize it more highly than a basket of cut flowers. That plant nearest you is '*le bon saline*,' not a rose of particular rarity, but of great beauty. They vary in color from an intense scarlet to a soft creamy hue; in some lights showing golden reflections, and with the velvet-like texture of the heart's-ease."

Doctor Langdon was on his favorite theme, and although Reuben could not understand that excessive passion for rare exotics, he admired the refined, and cultivated taste, in his father, and endeavored to look intelligent.

"Had you not better take them over at once?" asked Doctor Langdon.

"We must give them time to divest themselves of their traveling attire, and feel a little at home, and then I will walk over in the gloaming. I wish Hester was here to accompany me, and present me to Mrs. Singleton whom I have never met."

"They know of you," replied his father, "and Singleton will attend to all that sort of thing. Give them my

best wishes and congratulations on their safe arrival. He is almost recovered from his lamenes," thought Doctor Langdon, as he watched his son's retreating figure. "That alone should mitigate the pang of giving up my boy to Clive, for a home so far away." And Doctor Langdon sighed—feebly rose, and entered the house.

"I shall miss old Mr. Singleton," mused Reuben as he strolled along the path bordered with thick shrubbery that led to Oakland. "Many a toss has he given me in his arms, and my childish sorrows quieted with a timely box of bon-bons. The embarrassment and chagrin of unanswered questions in arithmetic, and historical dates, demanded in the presence of strangers, which I so keenly felt, are all forgotten in the remembrance of his warm and loving heart. Dear, kind, old gentleman; would I could once more hear your cheerful voice!"

Even when within a short distance of Oakland, Reuben could see nothing of the house, so thick and dark grew the gloomy wood about. The property was a fine one, and contrary to what is usual had not suffered from the late master's indisposition nor from the absense of his son.

The dwelling was a building of considerable antiquity and size, but with no very great architectural pretensions. Arrived at the gate, swung between two granite pillars, Reuben followed the broad gravel walk that led to the house, rang the bell and was answered by Thomas, the

old family servant, who preceded him through the halls, lined with trunks and boxes to the library, where all was quiet and repose.

There had been a fire burning in the large open grate; probably to dispel the dampness and vault-like air that pervades rooms uninhabited for any length of time. The last rays of the setting sun threw a soft golden light over the richly carpeted floor, the stately rows of high backed chairs, and oak paneled walls.

In waiting for Mr. and Mrs. Singleton to appear, Reuben Langdon walked over to the open window and looked out on the lawn. Something attracted his attention there, and chained his eyes to the spot. He had almost forgotten the object of his visit until recalled to himself by hearing Mr. Singleton's voice welcoming him to Oakland, with a warmth and cordiality of manner, Reuben in after years never forgot. He was unaccompanied by his wife, but in her behalf, expressed thanks and gratification for his fathers' acceptable gift.

With truth it has often been remarked, that death follows death in the same household; and not more than three years after old Mr. Singleton died, Robert Singleton was laid beside him, leaving two children, and his young beautiful wife, overwhelmed in grief and despair; not so much was it commonly reported from the loss she sustained as for his eternal welfare in the life to come, for he had not turned in temptation's hour to a loving

Saviour; and sought the only refuge and safety that is to be found within the everlasting arms.

In answer to a friend's letter announcing the death of Mr. Robert Singleton, young Langdon writes from London:

"I can scarcely believe it possible that alcohol could in three short years remove from this world, one possessing such strength and vigor of constitution, had I not been told by those who knew him well in his boyhood days, that at the early age of fifteen, some tempter of riper years had been near to lure him on. Absent from home, preparing for college life, far in advance of most boys of his age, handsome and intelligent, this fine young fellow scarcely conscious of it himself, was surely and inevitably laying the seeds of an early death. And as seen, alas! At the age of thirty-six, has passed away from earth!"

Think you Robert Singleton was happy all those years! There were moments when he would have given all he possessed to have begun life anew, with the advice he had so often laughed at and scorned. And ever and anon, a wife's pale face would come before him. And it is of this lovely woman, whom his untimely death thus early left a widow, my story is to tell.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Reuben Langdon was quite a child, he had met with an accident laming him as he supposed for life, and he shrank from mingling in public, or accepting any position which it was thought his talents commanded. Thus feeling himself shut out from women's society he had become morbid, and sensitive.

But to his great joy, he awoke one morning, to find himself walking with the ease and freedom of his fellow beings around him.

It went far towards softening a disappointment that occurred at that time, and which he was not permitted to explain. But it at once brought him home, and necessitated his accepting most cheerfully the position of tutor in Mrs. Singleton's family. He at least was now his own master, and with the handsome competence Mrs. Singleton's means could well afford, Reuben felt that although his future had lost its golden hue, Providence had not dealt unkindly with him.

Within a mile of Oakland, resided Mr. and Mrs. Churchill. The former was a cousin of Mrs. Singleton's on her father's side. They were an English family, and with the aid of a family tree, the blood of Earl's and of Lord's could be traced mingling in their veins—a con-

sciousness that has often soothed the trials and cares of impoverished families.

They had one son, an only child of fifteen years, and satisfactory arrangements had been made for him to join the daily class at Oakland.

As Reuben Langdon stood, the first morning of his instalment, looking out from the school room window, he saw this young lad with his slight graceful figure, come bounding along the long avenue of trees towards the house, ever and anon throwing a stone at some poor hapless bird; or catching at a branch from the wide spreading oaks that encircled his head, having apparently but a vague idea of discipline or study.

Reuben was almost a stranger to him, having been absent from his home so many years, but felt irrisistibly drawn to him, and bidding him welcome, placed a chair at the table, and expressed a desire that they might be true and fast friends, and he, patient and faithful to his lessons and books.

Mrs. Singleton had not yet made her appearance with her little children, and although Reuben had met her once or twice, he felt he knew her but slightly.

While musing over the the novelty of his situation, the door opened, and she advanced, leading her little boy, a beautiful child of four years followed by her daughter Katy.

"Good morning, Mr. Langdon, excuse my being a little late," and she glanced at Katy as she spoke. "I

hope you do not shrink from the task before you, I think it best," taking a seat Mr. Langdon had offered her, "not to enter into the peculiarities of your young scholar; knowing as opportunity calls them forth they will be developed under your observant eye."

Was it imagination at these words that Reuben noticed a slight change in Katy's color? Then gracefully stooping down and kissing Paul, she welcomed him to Oakland, and with a few more remarks and preliminaries, Mrs. Singleton withdrew, and Reuben was left alone with his little group of pupils.

He gave a cursory glance around, and found that Katy had taken her seat on his right; below her sat Robbie, loving Robbie, as one glance at his sweet eyes showed. Paul sat directly opposite.

Katy was slight and small, her complexion sallow, and a quantity of long light hair hung around her head. The large blue eyes gave an expression of wisdom and sadness that pained Reuben to see in a child of her age. He took out a small book to insert their names and ages. Beginning on his left, where sat Paul, he was promptly responded to:—

"Paul Churchill, fifteen years old."

Then turning to Katy was answered by:—

"Miss Singleton, twelve years old."

"I would like your christian name, or first name," demanded Reuben.

"Miss Catherine," was the reply.

By this time Robbie began to titter, catching a peculiar light in Paul's eye, and at length burst out into one of his loud merry laughs showing a mouth full of beautiful small white teeth.

Katy never moved a muscle of her face, and Paul who had been brought up by his mother with great care, not to hurt the feelings of others, looked down to conceal a smile, and with a pencil wrote a few lines on a paper before him.

Reuben tapped on the table calling them to order, saying, he allowed no laughing; and that Katy had answered correctly. Then taking up the roll again, addressed Robbie, who gave his age as nine, but corrected by his sister as four.

As to this little Master Robbie, Reuben concluded he was enjoying his last morning in the school room; having made sundry attempts to climb on the table and as suddenly disappearing beneath it.

Receiving the names and ages of his scholars, Reuben now turned to examine more particularly Paul, who had attracted his attention in the morning.

"Paul," he said taking up a book, "I suppose you read quite fluently?"

"Not as well as I should. Shall I try?" and he looked directly at his teacher with his honest, speaking eyes.

"Yes," answered Reuben, "I should like you all to read to me a little this morning."

Paul took the book, and for a boy of his age, read well and with expression. Katy also for her age did well, but Mr. Langdon was not surprised to find that Robbie scarcely knew his letters. He then required them to give him a few specimens in writing and spelling, and was astonished on looking at his watch, to find the morning had so far advanced. He portioned out to them the lesson for the morrow, expressing his pleasure at such a happy beginning; and bidding them 'good morning,' walked to the drawing room in search of Mrs. Singleton. Not finding her there he rang the bell and inquired of the servant, who brought him word Mrs. Singleton would see him in the library.

He found her engaged in the fashionable employment of the day; 'painting on china.' She was dressed in some light linen fabric, for the day was warm, and by her side were a few scattered forget-me-nots which Reuben fancied she had been copying. Pushing her chair gently from the the table where she sat, she took up exclaiming:

"Well, Mr. Langdon, you have given your first lesson. Were you satisfied; or did they give you any cause for complaint?"

"None whatever. I have every reason to feel encouraged. I could not ask for more intelligent children, and rarely have I seen so much beauty."

"Except in poor Katy," she rejoined. "She is an odd child, and yet at times I am strangely attracted towards her."

This struck Reuben as an unusual remark for a mother to make. But then he remembered having heard that Mabel Singleton never liked children; she had said they bored and irritated her, and that when she had answered one question it only gave rise to another; requiring much patience to satisfy their endless curiosity.

Observing Katy once or twice pass the door leading into the library, Reuben made no definite reply to Mrs. Singleton's last remark.

Robbie at this moment came running into the room, and with one bound was in his mother's lap. As she leaned over to caress him the child caught at her comb, and in one instant her shoulders were covered with a wealth of rich brown hair, and little Rob was enjoying heartily his successful exploit.

"At any rate," thought Langdon, "here is love and trust."

"You must tell me if you have everything you wish, Mr. Langdon," she said putting the child gently down, and simultaneously winding up her long hair in a large coil at the back of her head. "I did not intend troubling you with Robbie this morning, but he saw something unusual was going on, and I could not keep him from the school room door."

"He is rather too young for the class, and I thought, should it meet with your approbation, I would give Robbie lessons apart from the regular school hours."

"Oh, you must not trouble yourself with Robbie, though they all tell me I sadly neglect him. But my theory has been not to press children until after their eighth year. Katy being an only daughter, has had much attention given her."

"I find her not at all backward."

"No? And Madamoiselle Picot speaks encouragingly of her music. I think myself her touch is very sweet."

Reuben now rose to go, and walked as far as the door, when Mabel called him back saying:

"Will you not change your mind and remain altogether at Oakland? I have been exceedingly nervous and timid since my uncle left me, and have heard or imagined I heard, footsteps near my door at night.

The idea had always been more agreeable to Reuben to remain at his own home, and as had been previously arranged, spend his mornings teaching at Oakland. But then he had never known Mabel Singleton well, and now stood in the presence of a very beautiful woman. Her fears and timidity awakened his sympathy, called forth his protection, and scarcely conscious of the influence she was exerting over him, he promptly and cheerfully complied with her request.

"At least, he said, until your nervousness has entirely disappeared."

"I'm expecting a young friend," she added, "in a day or two, and will promise not to make it altogether distasteful to you."

Not heeding her last remark, he went on: "your suspicions do not fall upon any one in the house?"

"Oh, no. I should not be surprised if it was entirely imagination. My old nurse, Elsie, tells me it is the good angels standing around to keep sinners off."

"In that case I should not care to interfere with them."

"At all events, I trust there will be nothing more formidable to encounter," rejoined Mabel.

Reuben finally took his leave, and passing from the library into the hall, saw Katy still standing with her little straw hat on.

"Mr. Langdon, is Aunt Mabel alone in the library?"

"Your mamma is there, I do not remember ever to have met with your Aunt Mabel."

She looked a little incredulously at him and then replied, "I have no mamma; she, died in England!"

It was now Reubens turn to look surprised, and he said: "You do not really mean to say that Mrs. Singleton is not your mamma; that Robbie is not your brother!"

"Yes," she answered, "I do. My father and Uncle Singleton were brothers. It is just five years ago since

papa died and"—but she did not finish her sentence and Reuben went on.

"How long have you been in this country?"

"Scarcely four months. The Captain of the steamer brought me over; Aunt Mabel sent for me. Uncle Robert requested it before he died."

Reuben now vaguely remembered his sister having written him of the death of Mrs. Singleton's youngest child. He was in Paris at the time, but not being particularly interested, it had not left much impression upon him. The mist was breaking away that had enveloped him, and with this explanation he now reconciled Katy's age with Mrs. Singleton's youth.

"I will not detain you any longer, Katy; I think you wished to see your Aunt Mabel?"

"Yes," she replied, "Paul is going to show me his new mare, and I thought Aunt Mabel might have some message for his mother."

Langdon wished to renew the conversation, so waited until her return and then asked "if he might be permitted to walk with her until joined by Paul." Though she was but a child there appeared so much dignity about her, he did not dare take the liberty without asking her consent. As soon as she returned he continued:

"Have you always lived in England?"

"No," she replied, "we were in France three years. Mamma went there for her health; but wishing to die in

her own country"—here Katy's voice trembled, and Reuben rebuked himself for his thoughtless curiosity—"we returned to England."

To change the conversation as quickly as possible, Reuben went on:

"Three years in France! you must speak French perfectly?"

"Oui, Monsieur, rien n'est plus facile. Will you give us French lessons?"

"Yes, but you will not require very much assistance."

"I do not read it or translate it correctly."

Just here they encountered Paul, who had been impatiently waiting for his little friend.

"What kept you so long, Kate? I thought you were never coming," he called out.

"I may have had something to do with it," interposed Reuben, "however I will detain you no longer," and he walked down a secluded path that led to his home

CHAPTER III.

HESTER sat at the window with some formidable piece of work on her lap, when Reuben entered.

"Oh! she exclaimed, throwing the sewing down, "how did you make out? I have sat here thinking so much about it, and could scarcely refrain from smiling several times, picturing my handsome young brother seated at the table teaching!

"Restrain your smiles," he answered, "your brother succeeded admirably well. But Hester you never told me Katy was not Mrs. Singleton's daughter, and the relationship puzzled me all the morning."

"I thought you certainly knew of the little orphan Katy who is to make her home at Oakland. But then since your return, we have had so many other matters to discuss I have not told you half the news of our little village."

"Hester, what is Mabel Singleton's age?"

"Not more than twenty-four. Let me see, she married at eighteen, or near nineteen; Robbie must be four; that would about make it; I do not think she is a day older."

"And I am twenty-nine—five years her senior!" thought Reuben, with a pleasureable sensation.

"I do not know Mabel Singleton very well," continued Hester, "but some say she holds herself very queenly and is rather proud; did you find it so?"

"I thought her the loveliest woman I had ever met."

"She certainly is beautiful," said Hester, in an absent sort of a way.

"Was it a love match?"

"I think not. He was very rich and her parents insisted on the marriage. But I have always heard she was devoted to him."

"He must have been many years older?"

"Yes, I believe there was, at least, sixteen years difference between them."

"And very handsome," added Reuben, "as I remember him."

"Where's father?" he asked at length, turning to the door.

"As usual, out in the garden, but don't go yet. Will you be at Mrs. Churchill's this evening?"

"I had thought of it; shall I see about a carriage for you?"

"I am going with Belle Travers and her brother. They call for me in his 'T Cart,' and will see me safely home again."

Reuben reflected a moment, and then replied, "If I am not there, do not be surprised."

"If I introduce a painful subject, do not let it disturb you Reuben, but it still seems so strange to me that

Uncle Clive never again alluded directly or indirectly to your being his heir.

"Oh don't, Hester," replied her brother with a slight shade of disappointment in his voice.

"It was not handsome, it was dishonorable," she continued, excitedly, "to have educated you—adopted you—and then sent you home with nothing but his fine promises, and I am surprised you do not show a greater sense of indignation!"

"I was not sent home, Hester," answered Reuben calmly. "Exercise a little patience. One of these days I will be at liberty to explain it all, satisfactorily to you. And oh, dear sister, believe with me, 'There's a Divinity that shapes ones ends rough—hew them how we will.' I think however," he added smilingly, "I know where the shoe pinches."

"Where?"

"Tutor! Should you prefer it, there is the soap business," suggested Reuben. One of our most worthy citizens of New York has made an immense fortune in it; a man of great genius and inventive power.

"Don't teaze me, Reuben."

"Then why has my little sister so much pride? I must recommend to her attention Lincoln's favorite piece of poetry,—(beautiful thoughts too,) 'Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud.'"

"Hester, not the slightest possible shadow of lameness remains does it?"

"No, not the slightest. If mother had lived, how she would have delighted in your cure."

"Yes," answered Reuben, and sighed. "I was reading only yesterday a letter written to father in which she speaks of my lameness with such sorrow and anguish, and then indignantly rebels against old Surgeon Kingsland for his blundering manner of treating me! Those English surgeons showed wonderful skill. How does father seem, Hetty?"

"Rather feeble I think, but his spirits are good."

"Do you know I have promised Mrs. Singleton to remain at Oakland for the present. She imagines there are ghosts or something of that kind, around the house. Will you and father miss me very much?"

"Of course you must do as you please, Reuben, but I think Mabel Singleton could find some one else to stand sentinel at her gates and ward off her imaginary phantoms. I am not surprised, howerer," she added, applying her needle with nervous rapidity, "she bewitches every man that comes within her sphere."

"Then you think your brother bewitched, do you?" Reuben felt he was slightly.

"Time will answer that question better than I can," replied Hester.

Doctor Langdon now came in looking tired and warm.

Reuben rose and placed a chair for him by the window. He pulled his cravat off and took up an old palm leaf fan and began fanning himself.

"Hetty dear," he called out, "couldn't you make me a glass of lemonade this warm day,"

"What has tired you so, father?" inquired Reuben.

"I have been trying to repair the latch on that outer door, and I think now I have it all right."

Reuben walked out to look at it. Hester's eye caught his. Never had they seen such a combination of wood and nails fastened under and above any lock! How could they wonder at his flushed and heated face.

"You see, Reuben," he continued, "no one will be able to open that door but myself."

"No," thought Hester, "and I doubt very much if you can."

"And we shall be perfectly secure here at night," he went on.

"But father, what shall we do for air when you are not in?" And Hester actually looked aghast as she thought of the unventilated hall.

"You are far better off without air, Hetty. I lay all my rheumatism to that hall, with its back and front door open one half the time."

Reuben laughed and took up his hat to leave.

"How little we will see of you now," said Hester.

"I don't know about that. I am free from twelve until nine the next morning."

"Then you will dine with us?"

"Certainly, and take tea, too, if I am welcome."

Reuben made up his mind to remain at home as much as possible. He knew Hester was lonely. Her husband had now been on a cruise nearly two years, and their father was old and not much of a companion for one who was not more than twenty-five, and naturally of a gay and social disposition.

CHAPTER IV.

"HOW did you like your new master this morning, Kate?" said Paul, after Mr. Langdon had left them.

"I hardly noticed him."

"Something went wrong with you, what was it?" he continued.

"I kept Aunt Mabel waiting over an hour while I was trying to braid my hair."

"And then did not succeed," said Paul, taking up between his fingers her soft sunny locks.

"She came up to my room and asked so like mamma if she could help me, that a choking sensation came into my throat, and I turned away to hide my tears, not able to answer. Aunt Mabel left immediately. I am sure she thought I was cross and ugly about it."

"Never mind, Kate, some day I will make it all right with her."

But Katy felt she had been laughed at in the class. Her cheeks burned and a passionate longing for her mother came over her. Some one to go to and tell her childish sorrow—and she broke down and burst into tears.

"Oh," said Paul, taking both her little hands in his,

"if I could only comfort you, Katy," and a world of pity looked out from his dark eyes.

"Papa and mamma always taught me to say, 'Miss Singleton,'" she sobbed.

"To be sure," replied Paul, not knowing exactly what to say. He sat down on the grass beside her, and strove by every means to soothe and calm his little troubled friend.

"Talk to me about your mamma. Was she like Cousin Mabel?"

"A little," answered Katy.

"I would not call her back if I could," continued Paul.

Katy looked up through her tears astonished. "Why, Paul?"

"Because," he answered, "she is safe in the Shepherd's arms."

This made Katy silent for a few moments, and Paul went on:

"Cousin Mabel is good and true. You love her, don't you?"

"Oh yes, Paul, for I often wish I was Robbie when she holds him in her arms."

"Then go to her, don't be shy—but say 'Aunt Mabel, love me, too. Take us both in your arms.' She would do it, I know she would," said Paul, and he looked the love he felt for her.

"Do you think I will ever be happy again without mamma, Paul? I miss her so. Should your mother be taken from you, is the only way I can tell you."

Paul shuddered, and with a sudden burst of feeling, he threw his arms around her and soothed her tears away.

"Now, cheer up," he said, "and we will walk on; and I will tell you about our English cousins, Lord Dun Donald and his brother, Dan. Mr. Langdon knew them both abroad, and called yesterday to see them. The party to-night will be a swell one, you can bet," and here Paul whistled and gave two or three bounds over the grass at the thought of the ice cream. "The guests are coming from Hyde Park, Tivoli, and all around within ten or fifteen miles of us."

"Aunt Mabel's dress is beautiful," said Katy. "She showed it to me this morning—white grenadine with violets."

"Oh, you would laugh to see Aunt Lyddy," continued Paul, "she was up at five this morning, and had taken all the glass and china from the pantry shelves. I heard mother telling father that when she expostulated with her she replied, 'she had made up her mind to slave herself to have the evening go off well.' It is as good as a play to be with Aunt Lyddy; she does so many queer things. I wish you were coming. But I will save you a box of goodies, Kate. Look at my

knife!" and he opened a beautiful one, with a pearl handle and four blades."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Lord Dun Donald. I like him better than Dan, but mother don't. Tell me, Katy, truly, do you wish mother had invited you? We talked it up, but she thought you were too young."

"I am too young, Paul," answered Katy. "Then, all the parties in the world could not compensate for the happiness I am going to have this evening!"

"Why, what's that, Kate?"

"Darling Robbie! To hold him in my arms, and press his little face close to mine,"—and Katy's countenance beamed at the thought,—"to rock him, to put him to sleep—Elsie has promised me."

"That wild little fellow," said Paul, "I hear he was lost three times yesterday."

"He was, and the third time we found him in the ice-house."

"A cool retreat for Master Rob on a hot day," said Paul.

They had now reached the entrance to Mr. Churchill's place, and Paul and Katy passed through the gate, around to the rear of the house, where behind a clump of old chestnut-trees the stables were, and Paul led out his beautiful gray mare.

"Sometimes you shall ride, Kate," he said. "Have

you a saddle?" Then, seeing his mother at the open window, called out, "Mother, has Frank Bolton been here this morning?"

"No, dear," answered his mother.

"He promised to be here exactly at one."

"I am afraid some day," interrupted Aunt Lyddy, "we will regret having countenanced that wall-eyed boy so much."

"It may be, but I will not always be able to select Paul's companions. Is it not better to warn him than to awaken a stronger feeling in Frank's favor by prohibition and banishment? And then, Aunt Lyddy, after this morning's performance, I am surprised to hear you express any uneasiness as to the frequency of his visits here." At this Aunt Lyddy looked a little embarrassed.

Early that morning Paul had been despatched with a note of invitation to the Boltons, delayed for several days undergoing discussion as to the propriety of their being bidden to the feast. But Paul, as usual, with his arguments and warmth, encouraged by Aunt Lyddy, had prevailed.

"They are neighbors," he said, "that alone is sufficient. I know they are not connected with your Earls and Lords, but to see one, Aunt Lyddy, will be a great help to them in their social position hereafter, and you and mother should not stand in the way of it."

"Oh, Paul!" This was Aunt Lydia's usual exclamation when she thought him too clever to live.

"I know, Paul," remarked his mother, "but we have never invited any of them in a social way, and why begin now?"

Paul could not and would not see it.

"Oh well," said Aunt Lydia to his mother, "there are some things in life we must do, however distasteful, and this seems to be one of them."

"You have just hit it!" cried Paul.

"You can give them a verbal invitation, then," replied his mother.

"No, that won't do, it must come from you." And Paul flew to the writing-desk and placed the note paper, pen, and ink before his mother, and, leaning over her, watched intently.

"Now Frank's," he said, and hurriedly taking them in his hands, seized his hat from the hall table, and was off as the servant entered to announce breakfast.

All the interest Mr. Churchill took in it was to exclaim, "What has all this pow-wow been about? I could scarcely finish an article in my paper."

"Ellen, there he is, playing croquet with Paul and Katy."

"Who?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"Why, Frank Bolton."

Poor Aunt Lyddy, with her fears and her love for Paul, was ever in consternation and anxiety.

She was a maiden aunt of Mr. Churchill's, and had had the entire charge of him since his mother's death, which occurred during his early childhood. They left England together, and soon after Mr. Churchill entered into stock speculations in this country.

As he had once been her idol, now Paul, the son, filled that place exclusively and undividedly.

She would have given her life any moment for him, though often injudicious in her treatment, as those persons generally are who are governed entirely by their feelings.

Paul and Katy now entered the house, and Paul whispered something in his mother's ear.

"Certainly," she answered, "Katy, you will dine with us?"

"Aunt Mabel said I might, if invited," replied Katy.

When dinner was concluded, Mrs. Churchill said, "Would you like to see the supper table for to-night?" and led the way, followed by Paul and Katy. Paul talked fast and incessantly of the prices, which he appeared to know all about, having had his private interviews with the waiters.

"You see that candied pyramid, Kate? Before to-night it will be thirty dollars gone."

His mother looked in astonishment at him, and shook her head.

"A dead waste!" Then spying some candied oranges

and other fruits in a side dish, he filled his hands full and, casting a furtive glance around, crammed them down Katy's mouth with great vigor, who now felt like leaving, and said :

"Paul, I must hurry home before dark. Aunt Mabel will be looking for me."

CHAPTER V.

MABEL SINGLETON had given very little thought to Katy since she had become an inmate of her house, not intentionally but thoughtlessly. She saw that the little girl had all that childhood required, and even went so far as to give orders that the best of everything should be at her disposal, and that there should be no preference given by the servants or her nurse, Elsie, to her own child. Seeing Katy in moments of forgetfulness when childhood and nature assert their rights, joyous and happy, even at times noisy and heedless as her own little Robbie, she concluded she had thrown off the memory of her sorrow, or that the child had not much heart. But she did not see the little orphan alone at play, when the sight of a flower, or her mother's favorite tree, would start the tears to her eyes and cause her to call upon that dear name that could no longer answer and for those loving words that could no longer cheer. Nor alone in her room at night, when her mother's likeness, hanging from the wall, looked down upon her; nor when in the bureau drawer she saw the little pile of handkerchiefs hemmed by her loving hands, when again the cry would burst forth, "mamma, mamma, how can I live without you!"

Had Mabel known all this, her own warm heart would have gone out to the little orphan, and the love redoubled which had been so long withheld. And so it is, under our own roof, under our own eyes even, there are many aching hearts, and we know it not.

The hall was not dark, nor yet was it light, when Katy entered and ran hastily up the broad oak stairs to her own little room. Taking off her hat and gloves, and carefully placing them aside, she flew along the corridor to her Aunt's door, and knocked. A sweet voice said, "Come in. I am so glad you have returned, Katy. I have been looking for you. The servants are taking their tea, and while Elsie is at hers, will you play with Robbie? He does not seem to get along with Rhoda Hill, the nursery maid. Do you know why?"

Katy hardly knew what to answer, for Elsie had said, "Don't complain of Rhoda Hill to your Aunt, for she is a poor girl and I do not wish to take the bread and butter out of her mouth."

Mabel was ripping off some lace from a dress and did not notice Katy's hesitation.

"Can you tell me why, Katy?" she continued. "She is kind to Robbie, is she not?"

"Oh yes," replied Katy. "That is not the trouble."

"What is it then?"

"She does strange things, Aunt Mabel."

"How?"

"Throws the chairs and tables over, and when Elsie scolds, declares she never placed a hand upon them."

"Young and full of her pranks," thought Mabel, "but if she is gentle with Robbie and does her work well, I will let it go."

"Now for the important business of dressing," and Mabel rose and walked over to the glass.

"Katy, Eunice has gone out this evening to visit her sister, will you remain and assist me a little? I will show you my jewelry, too, which I think you have never seen. Take this key and unlock the middle drawer of my bureau in the dressing room, and bring me a large Russian leather box. Then you can take it to the window and examine at your leisure."

"Oh, how beautiful!" would Katy exclaim from time to time, as she held up to the light an exquisite mosaic necklace or diamond bracelet. "Do wear this to-night! But quick, Aunt Mabel; here comes Robbie! Had I not better hide them?"

It was too late! Robbie pulled the box from her hand, and in a moment the contents lay scattered in every direction over the floor.

Mabel and Katy looked at each other in hopeless dismay, and when they stooped to pick up the sparkling gems, Robbie mounted on their backs and insisted on a ride.

"It is of little avail," said Mabel, "we must give him

his play out, or peremptorily take him over to Elsie. I wonder she could not have kept him a little longer."

Of course, Robbie remained and played "I spy" and "horse" with Katy, until Mabel Singleton completed her toilet.

"Mr. Langdon may possibly return before me, Katy, should he leave the party a little earlier with his sister. In that case, tell Elsie to show him his room and have everything in order for him."

And throwing a light scarf over her shoulders, Mabel walked towards the door, when suddenly turning around she exclaimed, "Katy how do I look? Lord Dun Donald and his brother are to be at the party to-night and I must show them what America can do in the way of style and dress!"

"And beauty too," thought Katy, but had not the courage to say it.

The fragrance from Mabel's handkerchief, as she passed Katy, suddenly and strangely recalled her mamma, and as Mabel leaned over to kiss her good bye, she wondered the child looked so pale and turned so abruptly away.

"Strange little thing!" thought Mabel. Several times have I wished to caress her, when she has repulsed my attempt."

Left to herself in the twilight, Katy drew a chair to the window, sat down and looked out, leaning her little head against the window sill. The quiet home in England

stood out before her. The garden with its sweet, fragrant flowers; the roses that crept in at a certain window—and covering her face with her hands she cried out:

"Oh mamma, mamma, where are you! Why did God take you from me—and father too? Do you see your little girl sitting here so lonely, so lonely? I am always thinking of you, mamma."

Elsie hears the sob and enters.

"Come away, dear, with me. It is a gloomy house any way, and doing you no good sitting here in the dark."

"Oh Elsie, hear me once for a few moments—I dreamed of mamma last night."

"That must have comforted you, dear child."

"Oh no, it was of her dying—her last look—her last words!"

"What were they, darlint?" and Elsie drew closer to her.

"It seems so long ago. In the dead of the night, Elsie, the nurse came and called me, "'Quick, quick!'" she said, "'Your mamma is going!'" and hurried me into the room.

"She laid there, looking so white, so pale."

"'Come close, close, darling,'" she whispered, and I crept into the bed and threw my arms around her. "'God is calling me home, Katy.' (I could scarcely hear her, Elsie.) 'It is for a little while, and then you will follow, Don't weep when I am gone. You have been a dear,

good child. Speak, darling, I want to hear your voice.'"

"I could not, Elsie, and I sobbed, 'Don't, don't leave me!' and she died."

Elsie wiped her eyes. "Take heart honey, dear," she said, "it is all for the best. Dry up your tears and come with me; remember Robbie is waiting for you," and she led the little orphan to the nursery and placed him in her arms.

"Oh! kiss me, Robbie, kiss me!" the poor child exclaimed, "no one kisses me now; no one has, since mamma went away!" And dear Robbie as if touched with compassion, twined his little arms around her and kissed her over and over again.

"She will come back," whispered the little fellow, wiping away her tears with his own little handkerchief.

"Oh! if it were only true," murmured Katy, clasping him closer in her arms.

As it grew later, Robbie called for a story, and by degrees Katy felt his little head fall more heavily on her shoulder and knew he would soon be asleep. She began softly singing to him in the gathering twilight a little nursery hymn her mother had often sang to her, and then, at a sign from Elsie, gently rose to put him in his crib, but he called out, "Go on," and Katy had the happiness of rocking her darling one half hour longer.

Mr. Langdon came up just in time to hand Mrs. Singleton to her carriage.

"Are you not going?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "I sent my refusal this morning," and closing the door, he touched his hat and bade her "good night."

"How beautiful she is," he thought, and turned and walked up the stone steps.

CHAPTER VI.

THE evening of the party had now arrived, and Paul and his father walked for the second time the entire length of the drawing room, readjusting a curtain here, replacing a chair there, or changing some bronze figure or ornament to a more prominent and effective position.

When the servant entered to light the large brass chandelier and side lights, Paul took the taper from his hands, mounted the steps, and with nervous rapidity lit each burner. The servant silently stood aside, as no remonstrance came from Mr. or Mrs. Churchill.

"Get out of the way there, Aunt Lyddy," he cried out, "or that heirloom on the top of your head will be on fire! What is it? A yard of old yellow lace belonging to some of the great grandmothers a thousand years back?"

"Oh Paul!" exclaimed Aunt Lyddy, but the smiles around the corners of her mouth showed too well how pleased she was with his notice.

"I hear a ring," exclaimed Paul, throwing the taper over to the servant, and rushing behind the drawing room door, he looked out through the open space into the hall.

"It is old Mrs. Willows and her bald-headed husband!"

Another ring.

"Oh what fun! Come here Aunt Lyd," and he stepped a few feet back and caught her ronud the waist, dragging her down to the door.

"Oh Paul," was all she could say.

"There goes Mrs. Bronson and the pretty Louise. Thunder! here's Belle Travers; in the name of all that's wonderful what mountain is that she carries on her head?"

"A cluster of wild roses; how lovely they are."

"No, no, I mean the highest peak. You must mount stilts, Aunt Lyd, to give me the name and color of that!"

"Oh Paul, you're too much! It's her shell comb. I've heard Mabel speak of it's remarkable workmanship and hight. But what keeps Lord Dun Donald and Dan?"

"Their valet is laid up in bed. He has been at father's basket of champagne, I'll be bound, and there is no one to wash their faces and tie their cravats."

Another, "Oh Paul!" from Aunt Lyddy.

"There they come," now he cried, as Lord Dun Donald and Dan made their way in and out of the ladies' long skirts and dresses to the drawing room.

"Paul, we must leave our places; don't you see they are beginning to enter?"

"Paul," called out his father, "if you don't hurry the door will be thrown open and your nose taken off!"

When Mrs. Singleton entered Mrs. Churchill's drawing room, the guests had nearly all assembled and, for a country party, it was late. Mrs. Churchill's spirits rose at her entrance, for Paul had not been backward in telling his mother there would be no life or animation until his cousin Mabel arrived.

Mabel Singleton, though closely allied by blood to the English, had never liked them. Her mother's family had been proud and arrogant, and had never forgiven their sister for marrying an American.

Mabel knew all the circumstances connected with it, and at times could scarcely be civil to her Uncle Mack, who had on several occasions uninvited ensconced himself in her house.

She therefore felt relieved, when Mr. Churchill presented his English cousins, that they had no stronger tie or claims upon her than mere acquaintanceship. They being related to their host through some other branch of the Churchill family.

There was a striking resemblance, at first sight, between Lord Dun Donald and Dan, but after an hour or so in their society you lost it and nothing remained but that indescribable family likeness which is so puzzling at times.

Of these brothers, Lord Dun Donald's was the stronger

and more thoughtful character. He was tall and well built, a little inclined to embonpoint, but his high-toned, gentlemanly bearing impressed you at once.

Dan was a trifle shorter, and also stout. He had ar affectionate disposition, and there was a happy, humourous light in his bright blue eye which was peculiarly attractive.

If these young Englishmen had felt, on landing, a little superiority over their American cousins, it was pardonable, when you think of the specimens that reach their shore and which they accept as the highest type of well-bred Americans.

It is to be hoped that among the refined and cultivated, assembled together this evening, they will have an opportunity of changing their unfavorable opinion, for rarely will one find more elegance and refinement than is met with on the banks of the beautiful Hudson.

After the usual formalities of a first introduction had passed between Lord Dun Donald and Mrs. Singleton, Dan, as his brother always termed him, took out his glass and, placing it firmly in his eye, cooly stared at Mabel for some moments; then, replacing it in his pocket, exclaimed, "By Jove!" and walked off.

She turned to Lord Dun Donald who still remained at her side and remarked, "I have just received a proof of high English breeding."

He bowed. With the music and hum of voices, he

did not quite understand her, but took it for granted her remark implied a compliment. To do Dan justice, he had not the slightest idea Mabel had overheard him, for he trusted to the mingled murmurs of a crowd to drown his empathic exclamation.

"Do you leave for Canada in the morning?" asked Mabel, continuing to address Lord Dun Donald?

"That is our intention. We expect to return here again at the expiration of five weeks. We must see a little more of Churchill, you know—clever fellow!"

"Not so very," thought Mabel, without expressing her opinion.

"You have a very brilliant party here to-night," continued his lordship. "I am surprised my countrymen who have preceded us do not give a better idea of your social customs."

"Most naturally," replied Mabel, "they so rarely find entrance into the higher walks of society."

"How is that?" he asked, with a slight astonishment in his voice.

"I think the difficulty must lie in not having proper introductory letters. However, they appear quite satisfied to be seized upon and entertained by the city authorities, who, from their stand point, give them all the information they deem of sufficient consequence to receive.

"'Pon my word," thought his lordship, "she handles us a little roughly."

"And with this imperfect knowledge," continued Mabel, "seldom passing the threshold of a gentleman's door, they not unfrequently return to their own country and write a book on the manners and customs of America! However," she added, letting him down gently, "of late years your ideas are becoming more enlarged."

"Thank you," returned Lord Dun Donald with a slight inclination of his head, and then renewed the conversation by saying, "Can you give me the name of that lady standing near the sliding door, dressed in white with diamonds?"

"Mrs. Mansfield, of New York."

"Her air is decidedly high-bred, but why look further!" thought his Lordship, gazing admiringly at Mabel.

"And how unmistakable it is l'air noble," said Mrs. Singleton.

"You are quite right," acquiesced Lord Dun Donald, and then added, "Langdon tells me there is a geeat deal of aristocracy here among the old families; and the line quite as strongly drawn as in England."

"Yes, Dun Donald," interrupted Churchill, who stood near and caught his last words. "But talent and education in this republican government have as prominent a position, and rank equally with it.

"Ah," replied his Lordship, vaguely.

"I shall have to show them some attention," reflected Mabel, and better at once engage them to dine with me

on their return. She forthwith proffered the invitation to his Lordship and Dan, who had just then wandered to her side, finding it impossible to keep long from her presence, and it was politely accepted by them in return.

Mable, now seeing her friend Belle Travers looking hopelessly over in her direction and knowning a 'Lord' was a good deal to her, moved off and whispered in her ear, "Not been introduced yet?"

"No," retorted Belle, "and quite a piece of neglect I take it on the part of the host and hostess."

"Let me present them to you," suggested Mable.

"I can wait," rejoined Belle.

But Mabel detected a slight irritation in her tone, and indeed she was too showy a looking girl for England's Lords to pass unheeded by.

"How do you like them Mabel? for certainly you have had a good opportunity of judging," asked Belle.

"Very well," and Mabel hurried off quickly to George Churchill and caught hold of his arm exclaiming: "Present your Englishmen at once to Belle Travers, and ward off the gathering storm over your head."

"Certainly. But, Mabel, will you first walk with me a little while," offering his arm.

"Where shall we go?" she inquired.

"To the conservatory." Once there, he plucked a few carnations, beautifully pencilled with all bright col-

ors, and gave them to her. Then took one himself and tore it to pieces in an absent manner.

"Will you have an ice?" he abruptly asked.

"No, thank you, I am not warm and will wait until supper."

"I think you must have kept Langdon away to-night," he next said.

"I knew there was something on his mind," thought Mabel. "How so? Is he not free to come and go as he pleases?

"Why look at it Mabel; Hester Stedman is here with the Travers. It is a mile from Oakland. You both come from the same direction; from the very same house. You are unaccompanied with the exception of a maid. Were he here, would it not be natural for you to offer him a seat in your carriage, eh?"

"Not at all," said Mabel, throwing back her head haughtily. "It would never enter into my head."

"Well, well; don't look indignant. I merely imagined it might be an awkward affair all around and that, that had kept him away."

"Mr. Langdon certainly has powers of locomotion, has he not? and who would not enjoy a walk this fine moonlight night?"

"People might talk, you know."

"Of what?" answered Mabel impatiently. "You knew I was obliged to have a tutor for Katy; it was

among Mr. Singleton's last requests; and you were very glad to have the opportunity for Paul. Now stop all this nonsense." Then suddenly she exclaimed, "Have there been any remarks made, or is it the coinage of your own brain?"

After hesitating a minute or so, and seeing he had made an egregious blunder, he admitted the whole thing emanated with himself.

"I shall be on my guard, however," thought Mabel, "distant, though polite. No idle remarks shall be made about me."

"One thing more, Mabel," added Churchill, anxiously; "don't be hard on my countrymen."

"It would be unjust and unfair, George," was Mabel's reply, "to carry my prejudices so far. I wish I could banish from my mind their stern and harsh treatment of my mother, which only terminated with death."

Churchill relapsed into discouraged silence for a few moments, and then excitedly exclaimed, "You know quite well that Americans are intolerable at times."

"I shall not dispute it, dear cousin," she answered, moving off and looking back at him with a smile; "the whole world is wrong at times."

"I cannot argue with her," thought Churchill. "She is too beautiful to begin with; and I believe, half the time she amuses herself in fooling me."

When next Mabel's eyes wandered towards Belle, she

was wreathed in smiles, and the young Englishmen having good "fun," as they termed it, for Belle was brilliant, quick at repartee, and said with a good deal of dash whatever came into her head. Mabel feared she might be a little too lavish with her compliments, but *sauve qui peut.* Lord Dun Donald and Dan now took a few moments to themselves, and wandered about the rooms. They were very happy—these Englishmen, admired and courted—and enjoying themselves hugely!

"I say," whispered Dan, as they passed each other on their way to the supper room, "it appears all right here, eh? That Mrs. Singleton is a glorious creature. I shouldn't mind taking such a specimen of a wife back to England. The American money would be an immense advantage to me, Oswald. Confound it, why don't you answer?"

"Don't chaff, Dan," replied his lordship, pulling his moustache meditatively. "By the by, where's Langdon to-night? Churchill assured us he would be here."

"Confound Langdon, when champagne flows so freely," returned Dan, as he quaffed down the sparkling wine.

Paul, when he could take his eyes from the supper table, would glance at his cousin Mabel to see if she was receiving all the attention his boyish admiration felt she deserved.

That he should indulge in ice cream to an unconscionable degree, was not a surprise to Mabel, but she was

pained to see the ease and smack with which he quaffed down a couple of glasses of sherry.

The band now struck up Strauss' intoxicating "An der schönen blauen Donau," and quick as a flash of lightning, Belle Travers flew by encircled in the arms of some waxed-moustached dandy half her size, her long flowing train sweeping in an out among the guests, who hastily retreated to the other side of the room in momentary dread of a personal contact. At length, overcome by the heat and exertion, her partner landed her with one rush against the folding door, and spasmodically jerking from her side her large spreading fan, began vigorously fanning his panting partner.

Other couples now formed; foremost among them Dan, whose fine white cambric handkerchief was brought in requisition by the prolonged enjoyment of his favorite dance.

The lateness of the hour suggested home to the guests, and Dan rushed bare-headed to escort Mabel Singleton to her carriage. She laughed, as she drove off, to think how her heart had relented to the poor culprit for this one act of gallantry.

But what was it that puzzled Mabel Singleton that moonlight drive home? Was it that Reuben Langdon had preferred a quiet evening alone

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER Mrs. Singleton's carriage had driven from the door, Katy called out, "Is that you Mr. Langdon; would like to go to your room?"

A little warrantable curiosity induced Reuben to reply in the affirmative, and he followed Elsie up the stairs to his bed room door. There she paused and said, "Mrs. Singleton preferred you being on this floor and not far from the nursery. Her room is directly opposite."

"Have you been long in this family, Elsie," enquired Langdon.

"Since my master was a child, sir."

"Was Miss Katy's father an older brother?"

"Younger, sir, and died a year or two before his father. It was supposed the property would have been equally divided between Miss Katy and her Uncle Robbert; but it was all left to my master with the exception of thirty thousand dollars settled on Miss Katy. My Mistress does not allow her to touch a penny of it, until she is of age, and then, she says, with the interest she will have something quite handsome. Thomas overheard my mistress making the arrangement with her lawyer and requesting him to keep it from the knowledge of Miss Katy and her family. There's not a mean hair in

her head, sir! and she is very lavish with Miss Katy; her own child couldn't have more beautiful clothes!"

"You have heard no supernatural sounds around?" asked Reuben, casually.

She glanced cautiously about her before replying, and then coming a little nearer to Reuben's ear whispered, "I try to make light of it before my young mistress, but we have both heard not only sounds, but persons walking in the dead of night!"

Reuben strove to keep his countenance, she looked so mysterious, and her mouth had that puckered-in look, persons about to whistle have. "However," he gravely replied, "should it occur again you must knock at my door, and together we will sift it to its foundation."

"Oh, sir, don't meddle with them or you'll come to harm."

"I hope not, Elsie."

"It has been a pretty noisy house, sir, in my day," she continued, "and peaceable enough just now, but"—and she shook her head, went in, and shut the nursery door.

When left alone, Reuben gazed leisurely around and was pleased with the pleasant, cheerful aspect of his room. It was furnished with the utmost simplicity, but with evidence of good taste. The chairs and lounge were covered in narrow-striped red and white linen, and the curtains were of soft, dotted muslin. It looked

cool and comfortable. Twilight was fast deepening, for it was long after nine, and drawing out the large arm-chair from its recess towards the window, Reuben sat down and looked out on the garden and orchard beyond. He mused over the incidents or the day, the changes that had taken place in his life during the last twenty-four hours, until he heard Mrs. Singleton's carriage come winding along the gravel road to the house.

His first impulse was to descend and assist her to alight. Perhaps his second thoughts were better, and he prepared to retire for the night, but it was long before he could close his eyes or banish from his mind a soft hazel eye and a low-toned "Good night."

When Reuben rose the next morning, the sun was already high in the heavens and he feared he was late, having forgotten to enquire of Mrs. Singleton's breakfast hour the night before. Notwithstanding, he prepared his toilet with care, having made it a rule in life, if possible, not to run down in dress, manners or etiquette.

When he entered the breakfast room, Mrs. Singleton and Katy were already seated. Robbie sat on a little high chair by his mother's side, and was clamorously demanding more hash. Reuben took his seat opposite his little friend Katy, for whom he felt a strong sympathy; for were they not both in a measure dependent upon the smiles and favors of their young mistress?

She sat gracefully at the head of the table pouring out

the coffee, and began giving an amusing description of the party the previous evening and the young English cousins, as she termed them.

"Why were you not there, Mr. Langdon?" she enquired, "many were the regrets expressed for your absence."

Reuben replied, "he was gratified to be missed, but had not felt quite in the humor for dissipation."

"I understand you knew Lord Dun Donald and his brother very well," Mrs. Singleton continued.

"Yes, they were frequent guests at Mr. John Maitland's (Mrs. Churchill's brother) where we met often and became very good friends."

"It is astonishing how ignorant even the very best educated foreigners are of our country."

"It frequently surprised me," answered Reuben. "An American would blush to be so destitute of knowledge geographically and socially. But, of course, I found many exceptions and will instance Lord Dun Donald."

Mrs. Singleton did not appear to notice the latter part of Mr. Langdon's remark but went on, "I constantly lost my temper trying to answer their stupid questions when abroad, particularly a German Baroness, who exclaimed one evening, "Frau Singleton, how comes it you have escaped the vipers and scorpions in your own country? I had a brother who died there from their bite."

"I replied they did not run wild all over America;"

but she shook her head incredulously as if to say, 'No prevarication, I pray!' But the English voices I do admire. Even in shopping, I would frequently forget what I had asked for in listening to the rich deep tones of the men and women in conversation. You see I am not prejudiced, I can give praise where it is merited!"

"I am sure of it," said Reuben, absently. He had been admiring for some time her enthusiasm, and had remarked how utterly incapable she appeared to be of speaking on any subject, no matter how trifling, with indifference or languor. If she felt no interest, she was silent. Feign she could not.

"But you surprise me," he at length said, recovering from his revery, "as to the English voices; that hesitation at times creates such impatience on the part of the listener."

"All do not hesitate."

"No; it has been my misfortune, however, to have met with quite a number."

"There's a great deal of beauty in America, Mr. Langdon, especially among the men," she added with a smile.

Her manner puzzled him. "Is she speaking seriously or ironically," he thought; and answered, "Had you said especially among the American women, I should have agreed with you most heartily."

"Yes, there is a great deal of beauty among the American women," she answered gravely. "If you will walk

this way I can show you many specimens, especially in the Singleton family. This one with the powdered hair and pearl necklace, was Mr. Singleton's grandmother, and he was said to be very much like her. It was an English family originally, but she was born in this country. Unlike the English, if you remark, she has that serious, thoughtful gray eye. Such eyes always possess a charm for me. Katy is growing very much like her."

Langdon looked no farther. His eyes now became rivited to a face, he once said, he never could forget. From the wall it looked down upon him with a calm, yet resolute expression, and in what ever direction he moved, those eyes followed him.

Mrs. Singleton walked on, she knew what held him there, and Reuben's thoughts went back four years ago.

"It is strange," she said, as she rejoined him, "that I never met you in my childhood or girlhood. This was your birthplace, I believe?"

"I left so soon for Europe."

"And I was sent to a boarding school at the age of seven."

"So early!"

"Yes, I believe I was unmanageable at home, and was marched off to inflict others."

"I have met you before, Mrs. Singleton!"

Mabel looked surprised.

"Four years ago I watched you from this very win-

dow. You were walking towards those maple trees. I can remember the very dress you wore, and once you turned——"

"Good morning, Paul! good morning, Ellen!" exclaimed Mabel.

"I thought I was late," said Paul, and he dashed the hair from his forehead and looked speakingly around.

"It is a little after nine," Reuben replied, looking at his watch.

"Thomas," said Mrs. Singleton to the waiter, "call Miss Katy, and tell Elsie to bring Master Robbie to me."

So few American women give their children the title of 'Master' and 'Miss' under twelve, that Mabel Singleton's order fell pleasingly on Reuben's ear. As the little ones advance from babyhood to riper years, the habit still remains until the parents become indignant at the want of respect shown to their children that their own example and folly brought about. To be sure not often, but there have been instances where the mistress of a fine establishment, entitled also by birth and education to know better, has called out to her gardener, "Mr. Duggan, Mr. Duggan, have you seen Johnny,"—a lad of eighteen years old!

When Mabel found herself alone with Mrs. Churchill, she exclaimed—

"Ellen, what excuse did Mr. Langdon give for refusing your invitation last evening?"

"I have forgotten. It was a very polite note, however. Why?"

"Nothing, I did not know but there was some special reason. How lovely his sister Hester looked last night; her black lace dress louped up with flowers was so refined."

"She always wears black. I think she must know how becoming it is to her white, marble-like complexion," replied Mrs. Churchill.

"Were you surprised to hear I had invited her brother to remain at Oakland," asked Mabel, with a slight shade of embarrassment in her voice.

"I was a little," answered Mrs. Churchill.

"Belle Travers will be here soon and that will make it all right." Then Mabel dashed forth, "It does very well for you in your large beautiful home with Aunt Lyddy, George, and Paul, but I am entirely surrounded with children, and for the last month I have thought I should scream out with loneliness and fright, for you are not aware probably that I am living in a haunted house!"

"Haunted house! then it has become so very recently, Mabel."

"Oh, yes; it is too true, that pacing up and down, up and down the hall in the dead of the night! I hear it now," and Mabel placed her hands over her ears as if to shut the sound out.

"You have never spoken of it before, Mabel?"

"It only has occurred within the last six weeks."

"Why don't you invite your Uncle Mack again? He always seemed willing and glad to come."

"Oh don't speak of him. I have kept it to myself as long as I could, but he is nothing but an old English tyrant!"

"Oh Mabel, how disrespectful!"

"Ellen, you don't know what it is to be screamed at from the top of one's lungs to 'come down at once,' and frightened and trembling to stand in his presence and hear him call out in a dictatorial voice, 'Look at that child; how he is running over those flower beds!' Now I simply ask my own way with my own child, and no interference from Mr. Mack McMorris! His hard domineering nature was actually making a little deceitful coward of Robbie.

"Just before he left, I was walking over the grounds with the children. Katy caught a butterfly and Robbie cried out, 'Let it fly, Katy, quick; don't you see Uncle Mack's coming.'

"Not at all," I said, "keep your butterfly; your mamma is the best judge of what is right and wrong.

"'But mustn't we mind Uncle Mack?'

"This from Robbie, you know, who always will argue the point.

"My poor aunts lived in abject fear of their father all

their lives, and Uncle Mack is a complete counterpart of the old man."

"Oh Mabel, Mabel," exclaimed Mrs. Churchill.

"You would laugh to see with what reverence and awe they would speak of 'me father!' who was the veriest old Tycoon that ever lived. Long before the command was given, I have seen the hops and jumps in anticipation of it. He kept them cowed and in complete subjection one half their time."

"Mabel, you will make some exceptions, I hope, in our poor Englishmen?"

"To be sure, I will," said Mabel remembering the warm-hearted cousin George.

"Poor Dan, has been raving about you ever since yesterday evening. He cannot bear to leave this afternoon for Canada. But Lord Dun Donald seems inexorable, and quiets him with repeated assurances that they will return in less than a month."

"I am sorry," said Mabel "I can't reciprocate the feeling, but I can tell what might be possible did he shave off his mutton chops and part his hair at the side."

"What do you think of the elder brother, Lord Dun Donald?"

"I cannot see why you all admire him so much. Mine is not the massive style, with fiery red necks."

"Mabel, you are incorrigible this morning. I have often heard you before, but to-day you have excelled yourself. I think I must leave."

"Don't go," and with a sudden impulse of womanly softness, she exclaimed, "I have been rather capricious and unreasonable, and it is not kind in me when I see so little of you."

"I have sympathised with you, dear, throughout. But in regard to this haunted house, cease your fears. The running of rats and mice I've often declared was a human foot," (Mable smiled incredulously) "and we all know what imagination is. But will you not be in," she continued, "to Lord Dun Donald and Dan? I heard something about their calling this morning, and should like them to see this beautiful house and place."

"I have ordered the carriage at twelve," said Mabel, "and should I miss them, on their return from Canada I have invited them to dine with me. You are to keep me posted a little as to their whereabouts. I thought at first of giving them a late tea under the Oaks, but concluded a dinner was a little more stylish. Thomas is an excellent waiter, and I shall keep Rhoda Hill in the pantry to assist. She is very quick and bright, but a strange looking girl. Have you ever remarked her eyes?"

"Not particularly. How is Reuben Langdon getting along?"

"It is only his second day, but I like him so much."

"His teaching is a great trial to his father and sister. They had counted so largely on his uncle leaving him his fortune."

"I should think they would wait until his death to be worried about it," suggested Mabel.

"Most naturally. But Reuben has intimated that dead or alive he shall have none."

During Mabel's drive a thunder shower arose, and she was obliged to seek shelter at her friend's, Miss Travers, where she remained until late in the afternoon. When she returned to Oakland, Katy told her that owing to the violence of the storm Mr. Langdon had remained and lunched with them.

"What kind of a lunch was it, Katy?"

"A very good one."

"Anything hot?"

"A steak and Saratoga potatoes."

"How did Robbie behave?"

Katy smiled. "He leaned over the table and took all the rolls from the plate, placed two under his arm, and with his hands firmly held on the others."

Mabel looked annoyed. "What did Mr. Langdon say?"

"That he preferred brown bread," and laughed. "But he seemed delighted with Robbie, Aunt Mabel. He took him on his lap, showed him his watch, and told him stories."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. CHURCHILL'S anxiety was not altogether without cause in regard to Paul. She did not wish to watch him too closely, or let him feel she had lost confidence or trust in him, but she had on several occasions remarked an unusual excitement about him—a desire not to enter into conversation or meet her eye. On mentioning it to her husband, who was one of those easy good-natured sort of men, absorbed in his own speculations, and little time, as he said, for the ordinary affairs of life, he would only laugh and reply: "Confound it, Ellie; you take life too seriously; the boy is all right, '*les choses s'arrangent*," a favorite expression of his, then humming a tune he would walk to the window, throw himself in a chair, take out a cigar and coolly puff away as if he had satisfactorily solved and settled the whole difficulty.

Frank Bolton at heart was not a bad boy. He had many obstacles to contend with in his bringing up, as children must have when their parents, on almost all vital points, are at direct variance. Vain were the mother's teachings with the father's example; or her warnings and admonition with his ridicule and laughter. One evening Frank Bolton had been particularly desirous

that Paul should accompany him to a political meeting, within a mile of their residence. And as Frank put it, the offer was a tempting one to Paul.

"A crowd, a band of music, and a supper afterwards, to be given to the speaker of the evening."

"Father, has been posting up for the last fortnight," said Frank, "and it will be fun to hear the Governor speak. I would not miss it for worlds! Do not, however, mention it to your mother, for we will not return until late, and she would only worry about it."

Now, Paul did intend mentioning it to his mother, but on reaching home his mother and Aunt Lydia were out driving, and he left word with the servant to say, "he was with Frank Bolton and might not be back until late in the evening."

When Mrs. Churchill returned from her drive it was after seven. She rang at once for tea, and meeting Mr. Churchill in the hall exclaimed: "Half starved, I have no doubt, so we will at once to the tea-room! But where is Paul?" she continued, looking a little anxiously around. "He can't be far off, for driving by the Bolton's, the house was entirely closed, as if they had gone out for a day's excursion, and the servants, chatting around the grounds, did not quite indicate the presence of master and mistress."

"And now," interposed Aunt Liddy, "that his mornings are all spent at Oakland, he would not have gone up there."

"Oh, never mind speculating about Paul," cried out Mr. Churchill, impatiently, "he will turn up all right, I'll be bound, I want my tea; surely I have waited long enough for it," and they simultaneously sat down to the table.

"Ellie, you cannot be so silly as to worry over Paul's absence?"

"Why no, George, merely asking for him is not worrying over him. What will you have?" and Mrs. Churchill prepared to make the tea, giving apparently very little further thought or anxiety to Paul.

"That little Katy Singleton is going to make a beautiful woman, Ellen. I saw her this afternoon driving with Mabel," observed her husband.

"She will," replied Mrs. Churchill, "if she outgrows her delicacy."

"Paul," remarked Aunt Liddy, "says Mabel is becoming very fond of her; that at first she thought her cold and indifferent."

"Look out, Aunty, for your cap strings—don't you see they're going in your tea!" cried out Mr. Churchill.

The waiter now entered, walked around and addressed a few words in a low tone to Mrs. Churchill. Her husband caught the name of 'Master Paul.'

"What's that? what's that?" he called out.

"John says," answered Mrs. Churchill, "that Paul left word he was going with the Bolton's to attend a political

meeting at Endfield and would not be back until quite late."

"How stupid in me," said Mr. Churchill. "I knew all about it. On my way up from the train I saw notices of the meeting placarded all around. To be sure he will not be back until late. I hear it is to be quite an affair, and you must not look for him until long after eleven, if not later."

"I should like to leave this neighborhood altogether," burst forth Aunt Liddy, "and get beyond the reach of that red-headed family! What right had Mr. Bolton to take a lad of fifteen to a large political gathering, where all sorts and classes meet to carouse and drink! Let him do with his own son what he likes; but he should have certainly given Paul's mother the privilege of refusing the invitation!"

"I agree with Aunty," replied Mrs. Churchill, striving to appear calm and to suppress her feelings, at the same time quite as indignant as Aunt Lydia. "Mr. Bolton may not have known, however, Paul was to have accompanied them."

"I don't know that," rejoined Aunt Lyddy, in the same excited manner. "I should not be surprised if it had been a preconceived and concocted arrangement all around."

"I should have been rejoiced if Paul had given it up altogether," said Mrs. Churchill, "when he learned I was out."

Mr. Churchill looked from his wife to Aunt Lydia in astonishment. "You cannot expect to find a boy of fifteen quite as magnanimous as that," he exclaimed. "Now take my advice; and think no more about it. I have been to many a political meeting at fifteen, and have not been ruined by it!"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Churchill, "but not with such an unprincipled man as Mr. Bolton."

Mr. Churchill fidgeted about a good deal. Opened the windows and closed them turned over books, and threw them down, and then cried out, "What consummate nonsense it all is!"

Mrs. Churchill withdrew to the bay window that looked out on the hills beyond. The rose-colored clouds were fading to the faintest pink, and the distant mountains wore the deepest violet. She did not seem inclined to conversation, and when the servant brought in the lamps, still remained in the same position. Mr. Churchill sat down at the table to smoke and read his paper, followed by Aunt Lydia, who drew from her knitting bag an unfinished sock, that had been in process of completion since the early spring months, but had never lengthened further than the ancle, for, as the accomplishment was taken up late in life, more time had been consumed in ripping than knitting.

Mrs. Churchill now drew up to the table and took out her work also.

The hour of nine was fast approaching when Mr. Churchill began generally to think of bed, and rising from his chair exclaimed, "Well, I have had a hard day's work of it, and will leave you, Ellen and Aunt Lyddy, to do the waiting and wailing until Paul makes his appearance."

Mrs. Churchill smiled and bade him good night, but not without a reiterated request on his part, "to be disturbed as little as possible when they retired for the night."

"Aunt Lyddy, don't you sit up later than ten for Paul," said Mrs. Churchill. "I do not mind being alone, and I have several little matters to attend to which will occupy me until near eleven if not after."

"It is indifferent to me how late I sit up," replied Aunt Lyddy, "and I can knit away here and keep you company." So they wound up the mechanical lamp, and drew their chairs closer to the table for a little quiet talk together.

"Ellen, I think Mabel quite like her old self again," observed Aunt Lyddy. "I have not seen her so cheerful and happy since her husband's death. How she ran down during the last year of his life!"

"That was when she gave up all hope of his recovery."

"It was an awful death," continued Aunt Lyddy. "Oh why don't they try and pull through, Ellen, on

strong tea and coffee! It is very stimulating, and would well take its place. Cut loose, endure agonies from abstinence, anything, than be a slave to such a habit, or any habit!"

"Oh Aunt Lydia what is that taste that comes before one's life, one's wife, and one's God?"

"I cannot tell, dear; I never could."

"I have always had great sympathy for those who are striving to overcome it, and can scarcely keep from telling them how I love and respect them," said Mrs. Churchill. "It requires such moral strength and God's help."

"Yet time and again I have seen it accomplished," said the good old soul, Aunt Lyddy. "I have often wondered," she went on," why Mabel takes so to Belle Travers; to my mind she is not genuine like Hester Stedman."

"Mabel is amused with her, Aunty. She does not seek her for love and sympathy. I do not myself quite understand Belle, for I have seen the tears start to her eyes at a tale of distress, and her purse is always open to relieve the poor. I think that careless, indifferent manner of hers is often put on to hide her true feelings.

"Then her music has a wonderful charm for Mabel. She has often remarked, 'A person to play with such feeling must have soul.'"

Aunt Lyddy began to yawn and look sleepy. Mrs.

Churchill, looking at her watch, found it was long after twelve.

"Oh, why don't Paul come?" she cried out.

"Let us talk about it, dear. It always gives relief. Ellen, you never go to any one in your trouble?"

"Oh, yes, Aunty, I do. To a truer and more faithful Friend than any on earth. 'None who find him seek farther.' You remember the beautiful words I once gave you:

"'I always go to Jesus when troubled or distressed,
I always find a refuge upon His loving breast.
I tell him all my trials; I tell him all my grief,
And while my lips are speaking, He gives my soul relief.

"'I always go to Jesus, no matter when or where
I seek His gracious presence, I always find him there!
In times of doubt and sorrow, whate'er my grief may be,
I always go to Jesus and *Jesus comes to me*."'

When Mrs. Churchill had finished she looked up at Aunt Lyddy, whose soul she thought would have been moved as her own had been by these lines so full of trust and faith, but her head was nodding and her eyes looked dull and heavy.

"Aunt Lyddy, how sleepy you are!"

"Sleepy! there is no sleep in me, Ellen dear," she replied with that instinctive indignation which such an accusation never fails to rouse.

"Well, then you are tired," said Mrs. Churchill, smiling, "and you must go to bed. It is selfish in me to

keep you up any longer, and I will go as far as the second floor with you. I prefer waiting for Paul in my dressing room."

Aunt Lydia silently acquiesced, and rolling up her knitting placed it in her bag. The poor sock looked like a mingled mass of red yarn, as Aunt Lyddy had been too talkative, and at times too sleepy, to give it much attention.

When they reached her room, Mrs. Churchill sat down on the first chair near the door.

"Oh Aunt Lyddy, what shall I do with these wretched Boltons? They always come between me and Paul."

"Never mind, dear," answered Aunt Lydia, "Paul will soon be going to college now and that will end them."

"You remember how it was," she went on, "about the knife. Had it not been for the child's natural nobility of character, that viper would have persuaded him to retain the change. And Mrs. Bolton such a lovely woman, too."

After leaving Aunt Lyddy, Mrs. Churchill entered her dressing room, closed the door and sat down. Her husband, untroubled, undisturbed, was sleeping peacefully in the adjoining room. It was not the first time she had watched for Paul, but then never so late as this.

She sat by the open window which looked out on the road to Endfield, that she might sooner detect the sound of the wheels as they came along through the carriage

drive direct to the house. It was now near two, and no Paul yet. She tried to imagine it all right, and pictured the meeting over, the crowd dispersing, the Boltons seeking their carriage, seated in it, and rapidly driving home. She gave them twenty minutes, then thirty—more. She tried to read, but in vain; she could not control her thoughts from dwelling on Paul. She became nervous, her heart beat at every sound, and she started at the slightest movement of her dress.

The distant village clock struck three, then four.

"Paul, Paul, my darling," she sobbed aloud; "where are you? Oh my child, my idolized child, let it not be what I most dread!"

She rose and walked up and down the room; came back and looked out again on the clear moonlight, and this time distinctly discerned Paul's figure advancing unsteadily along through the dark trees to the house.

She knew all—trembled, and sat down.

It had been Paul's custom from a child always to stop at his mother's bedroom door and relate the little events and pleasures of the day. He now passed it, and turning to the left slowly ascended the stairs to his own room, with a "good night, mother," that sounded husky and unnatural to her ears.

This may seem a trifling and foolish incident to show so much feeling about, but it is not always what is—but what might be—that gives the heart its keenest anguish!

Mrs. Churchill prayed on her knees that morning, for it was no longer night. "Father, Thou knowest all! Look with pity on my poor aching heart! In Thy unerring care I place my darling child. Love him, forgive him. Oh Father, hear!"

It was as early as seven in the morning, when Mrs. Churchill completed her toilet, and passed out from her own to Paul's room. She softly opened the door and looked in. Seeing his eyes closed she noiselessly turned to leave, but he had heard her step and cried out, "mother!"

In a moment they were in each others arms.

"Oh Paul, my darling child!"

"Can you forgive me, dear mother?"

"Yes, yes."

"Your heart shall never ache again."

"I am sure of it, my darling."

"Believe me it was not planned."

"I do; indeed, I do."

"Mother, shall I tell you all about it? Would it relieve you to know?"

"Oh I cannot say. Tell me it will never occur again; tell me you do not like it; tell me Frank Bolton shall have no more influence; assure me of that. That alone Paul is all I care to hear."

"I promise, mother; faithfully promise. It was to appear like the others I made a fool of myself last night,

and something Frank Bolton said. But never mind, it is unmanly to throw it upon any one. I and I alone am to blame! Mother, why have you always had such a dread of drinking?"

"I have seen so much of it Paul. You know my brother, your Uncle Jack, and then Mr. Singleton—that was the saddest case of all! Your Uncle talked very freely with me about drinking. 'Tell Paul,' he would often say, 'ever to remember the prayer our Father gave to the world, "Lead us not into temptation."'"

"What then, mother?"

"He fought a good fight; conquered and won."

"But he died after a few years!"

"Yes, dear, but what of that when to hear the master say, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life.'"

"Mother, why do so many men drink? I should think it is so much easier to go without, than to suffer with it."

"I have often thought, Paul, what a happy world this would be if Congress passed a law prohibiting brandy or whiskey being made or imported into this country." And Mrs. Churchill's face became radiant at the thought.

"Tell me a little about Mr. Singleton; I remember how often you went to Oakland when he was so very ill."

"He would never speak of it, or admit he drank, and

consequently your cousin Mabel had very little influence over him. For we can never reach one's heart or sorrow if it is withheld. She was very brave though, and did all she could by her love and attention to win him from it. The last evening we sat and waited for him, I shall never forget. Your cousin Mabel, I cannot tell why, always locked the door of the little reception room where we sat, and used to playfully remark 'to be forewarned is to be forearmed.'

"We heard a quick excited step along the hall, and the door knob quickly turned. Before your cousin could rise to unlock it, the bolt was burst asunder, and he stood before us! She immediately touched a bell, and I heard the heavy tread of a man's step, and I knew his servant was at hand.

"I cannot enter into all the particulars, Paul, but he had the tremens, and was placed in bed and never rose again. Often, as your cousin Mabel and I sat by his bedside, he would turn his poor, faded eyes upon us and look so sad, it would make your heart ache. But one thing, my darling, remember, I bind you to nothing. Be moderate in all things. I do not like promises; at least they would not do for you."

"No," replied Paul, "for if broken, I should lose my self-respect and, maddened at the chains that held me, rush more wildly into foolishness and folly."

"With his good sense," thought Mrs. Churchill, "I

need no longer fear my child! But Paul, dear, I have been talking with you over an hour. Rise; it is after eight, and I must go and see about the breakfast."

"Mother dear, I will be true to my promise!"

And he was; Paul never drank again.

When he entered the breakfast room, Aunt Lyddy sat at the table alone. He wished her 'good morning,' but without taking the slightest notice of his salutation, she exclaimed, "Wayward boy! I am thoroughly ashamed of you! I know the unseemly hour you entered last night! I shall shake you," and before he had half suspected her intention, she applied her words to action, exclaiming: "Have you no vanity? What will become of your beauty and strength? With red eyes, red nose and—" but hearing his mother's step at the door she suddenly checked herself and hastily retreated to her seat, adjusting her cap which had become misplaced from the violent exercise.

Paul merely laughed. He loved and understood his Aunt, whose indignation spent, good feeling returned, and before Mr. and Mrs. Churchill entered the breakfast room, she was overloading his plate and bustling around him as devoted and fond as ever.

"Well, Paul," said the easy-going father, "what of the grand political meeting?"

"I scarcely know where to begin, or how to describe it," he answered. "Never was I so amused or enter-

tained. In the audience near me, sat an honest-looking, hard-fisted man, who, as the several speakers were addressing the meeting, would call out from time to time in stentorian tones, 'Johnson! Johnson! we want to hear from Mr. Johnson!' This continued through several addresses, when finally the President of the meeting came forward on the platform and said, 'The individual who has been calling for Mr. Johnson will please hold his tongue, for it is Mr. Johnson who is now addressing the audience.' He of the big lungs who had called so long for Johnson then arose in his seat, and pointing to the speaker cried out in tones indicative of the supremest disgust:

"Why that's not Johnson; that's the little chap that kept pulling at me and telling me to call for Johnson!"

"I can't see the joke," called out Aunt Lyddy in the midst of the laughter, and looking puzzled beyond measure.

"What perverse stupidity, Aunty, the little chap was Johnson," explained Paul, "and took this novel way of introducing himself as a speaker to the audience."

Mr. Churchill now followed his wife to the window and whispered in her ear, "Ellie, you must see the folly of your anxieties over Paul. I'll be bound he was in early enough last night, and is as bright as a button this morning. *Les choses s'arrangent*, eh, dear?" and the good-natured, indifferent papa caught up his hat and hastened to the train.

CHAPTER IX.

REUBEN LANGDON had now been at Oakland nearly a month; and with the exception of the first week or so, had scarcely seen or exchanged a dozen words with Mrs. Singleton. She never made her appearance, as formerly, at the breakfast table until after he had left for the school room, and he ceased to ask Katy "if her Aunt was ill," as the answer had invariably been, "No," and concluded, consequently, to give himself no farther uneasiness about it, but notwithstanding, her avoidance annoyed him not a little. But this morning, after closing with the lessons, as he was passing out on his homeward way, she suddenly advanced from the library door and stood before him.

"Mr. Langdon," she exclaimed, "I have been waiting to see you. Will you give me the pleasure of dining here to-day?"

"I shall be most happy."

"It is a dinner given to Lord Dun Donald and Dan. They are on the scenes again."

She was standing as if in haste to depart, and Reuben sought some excuse to detain her—for had he not longed for this opportunity—and ventured to remark, "I scarcely see you now in the school room."

"No," she replied, "I have missed my French for several days."

"Not intentionally, I hope?"

"I have not had much time to give to it lately."

"You were making such progress," he added, "do not give it up."

"When is the next lesson?" she inquired.

"To-morrow. May I look for you?"

"Yes," was her reply, "and I may bring a new scholar."

"Who?"

"Miss Travers. Do you know her?"

"Slightly."

Reuben could have stood all day looking at the soft light in her hazel eyes. But he had a letter of some consequence in his pocket, sent to him in the morning by Hester, bearing a black seal and post marked, London, and he knew that anxious faces were awaiting his return home. Still he lingered.

Seeing his hesitation, Mabel said, "Mr. Langdon, I have a few little matters to attend to this morning; will you excuse me?"

"Oh certainly," he replied, and touched his hat as she passed him to an adjoining room.

Reuben remained standing some minutes in thought. Suddenly perceiving the rose, Mabel had held in her hand, lying at his feet, he stooped down, picked it up and, carefully concealing it, left the house.

"Whatever that letter discloses," thought Reuben as he walked along, "and the black seal and motto portend some event in my life, for the next six weeks, at least, I must fulfill my engagement at Oakland. Katy and Paul have become very dear to me, and—but what right have I even to indulge in the dream? Perhaps"—and he felt a sudden glow thrill through his veins—"the right of wealth! which as the poor tutor I could not offer. Was it fancy? It was. Sober reason whispered, 'No word or look has she ever given you to build your fondest hopes upon. Indulge in no false idle dream; be true to yourself; do not give your heart where such gift is not desired, perhaps despised!'"

Two faces at the window now recalled him from his reverie. To keep them no longer in suspense, Reuben hastily entered, broke the seal, and read as follows:

"To Mr. Reuben Langdon, Esq:

Dear Sir,—I write to inform you that your Uncle, Mr. Clive Langdon, died on the fifteenth ultimo. He had been ill for some days, but no anxiety had been entertained as to an unfavorable result, until the last twelve hours. His lawyer opened the will and desired me to advise you, that you are left his sole heir, and legatee of his large fortune of one hundred thousand pounds. You can enter into immediate possession. Your fortune is vested in the English funds. Chalmers has the will and the necessary documents. Until further informed, I remain, Respectfully yours, etc.

"Can it be possible!" exclaimed Reuben, "I rich! I, who have so often imagined it; pictured it!"

Silence fell for a minute which was interrupted by Doctor Langdon, who cried out, "Yes, Reuben, my boy, you are a rich man now!"

"What shall we do?" exclaimed Hester, excitedly. I once thought the news of a fortune would make me scream right out with gladness, but I find it has taken all my breath away."

"It will come back quickly enough, Hetty, when I settle something handsome on you and father," returned Reuben," "It has always been a hard trial to me to have either of you want for anything."

"I knew it, Reuben," answered Hester, thoughtfully, and then exclaimed with sudden animation, "But let me see that letter once more; I cannot realize I have such a rich brother!"

"There it is; one hundred thousand pounds, in black and white!"

"Why Reuben, that is five hundred thousand dollars of our money."

"To be sure it is," and Reuben felt himself somewhat dazed by it.

"Why, what is the matter with father!" cried out Hester, running over to him and pulling the handkerchief from his face. "Look, Reuben; he is actually weeping!"

"No, I'm not; I'm all right," said Doctor Langdon, trying to look cheerful through his tears.

"He's not strong, and perhaps," added Reuben, "feels his brother's death, which none of us have thought of yet!"

"Not a bit of it," returned Hester decidedly. "Nothing but this large fortune has melted him to tears!"

"Give him a little air; it is so close in here," continued Reuben and gently led him to the door."

"I was thinking, Reuben," and he took out his silk pocket handkerchief and wiped his eyes,—

"I know, father, of mother. But I fully believe she is permitted at times to witness our sorrows and joys and is with us now."

"I was thinking of her, Reuben; but, also, of the cares and responsibilities this wealth will bring you!"

"I can manage all that, and will try to be a good steward. Think of relieving the misery of others!"

"Oh aye!" he exclaimed.

"Divert his thoughts," whispered Hester.

"Listen, father, to our plans; shall we tear this old house down, and build up a new one with piazzas, parquet floors, and hard wood finish?"

"Oh don't, Reuben," cried his father, old memories and associations clinging to his little home.

"That will do now," said Hester. "Father is not very strong, and I think has had enough for one day."

"Hester," inquired Reuben, after his father had become composed, "it is not necessary that we should 'assume the trappings and suits of woe,' is it?"

"No, I never saw my uncle but once, and then he scarcely noticed me."

"Oh, don't wear mourning with that dyed crape stuff," interposed Doctor Langdon. "The very smell is destructive to health."

"That settles it," said Reuben, looking at Hester with a smile, and continued, "our good luck will travel fast enough without speaking of it, Hetty, though that quick fellow Paul may suspect something, for he saw me take the letter this morning, with a look of surprise at the black seal."

"It will be such fun to hear the remarks and innuendoes of our neighbors, as evidences of wealth crop out," said Hester, and then added, "but seriously, Reuben, we have not taken his death to heart very much."

"No," answered her brother, "we have received the news of our uncle's death as all such deaths are received where affection and love is never given or sought. That he had generous and noble feelings, has been proved; for what has he not done for me? But the heart wants more, Hester—love and sympathy—and who can live without them? Now I will tell you and father, as death cancels all secrets," he went on, "why I returned home so unexpectedly this spring.

"Our uncle became engaged to Miss Chadwick, an old youthful flame, I believe. He wished nothing said about it until after his marriage, and I promised to com-

ply with his request. I fancied after awhile my presence became a restraint to him. I have no doubt I constantly reminded him of the hopes and promises his folly had dashed. At all events, it became disagreeable for me to remain, and as you well know, one bright morning in April I set sail for America!"

"It is as clear now as an open book, and oh, how I have troubled my poor brain over it," replied Hester.

"Don't you remember, Hetty, I told you once it would be all satisfactorily explained?"

"But what strikes me as more singular still," remarked Hester, "Miss Chedwick's name was not mentioned in the will!"

"I have no doubt it was his intention to leave her everything, but death interfered in our behalf."

"Father," continued Reuben, reflecting a moment, "would it not be fair to settle two thousand pounds upon poor Miss Chadwick?"

"Better not show too much haste," replied his father.

"This sudden accession of wealth is a little too novel for the old gentleman to part with any of it yet," thought Reuben, and then added aloud, "Have we not talked it up sufficiently, Hester?" looking round for his hat. "A walk is absolutely necessary to me after all this excitement!"

"First, let me have your penknife for a few moments, Reuben; I can't tell where I've laid mine," said his father.

In drawing it from his pocket, a white rose fell to the floor.

"What a beautiful rose," exclaimed Hester. "If we can turn our thoughts a little from the shock they have received, let me ask, do you carry them about with you in this manner, Reuben?"

"Not always," he replied, slightly confused.

"Let me see what class it belongs to," said his father, holding out his hand.

"It is a little too much faded for that purpose," re-replied Reuben; "I will bring you a fresh one in the morning," and annoyed at the discovery, he boldly placed it in his botton-hole and left.

Just here the door moved ajar, and a sweet little baby face peeped through.

"There's my darling Jimmy!" cried Hester. "Oh, you dear child!" and she caught him up and devoured him with kisses. "You don't know that we are all rich now, and you, darling, shall have loads of toys and presents!"

"Is it Christmas?" inquired Jimmy, releasing himself from her arms.

CHAPTER X.

"HOW delighted I am to see you, Belle!" said Mabel Singleton to her friend Miss Travers, as she drove up to the door, banjo and baggage on hand, for Belle's accomplishments in the musical line were various. "I have been looking at my watch for the last half hour, impatient for this moment."

"What a lovely reception!" replied Belle, as she followed Mabel into the hall.

"Will you come at once and lunch, or go directly to your room?"

"Oh, to my room first. I have had a long dusty drive, and I hear Mr. Langdon is staying with you. Nothing like first impressions, you know."

"Have you never met him?"

"Years ago, when he was quite young, but not since his return from Europe. I admire him immensely!" Then, turning around and looking for her hand-bag as they reached her room, she unclasped the lock and drew from it a small comb, and began retouching and patting her puffs. "I see you wear your hair *á l'anglaise*, Mabel," retreating to and from the glass to see the effect, "but it is not my style."

Then, taking out a soft mull handkerchief, trimmed

with Bretonne lace, she folded it carefully over her buxom shoulders.

"Belle," exclaimed Mabel, impatiently, "Mr. Langdon is not in the house; he seldom lunches or dines here, and if you do not hurry, it is scarcely worth while taking any. It is already after two."

Katy and Robby had nearly finished when they entered the dining-room.

"Why, there's Katy Singleton! come!" and she opened her arms for Katy to rush in, who, hesitating and embarrassed, could but submit to her impetuous embrace. She then turned to Robbie, but little success in that quarter. He kicked and screamed and cried out, "I won't be kissed," and Mabel seeing his knife and fork held menacingly up, flew around to extricate them from his hands! She was in momentary terror, lest they might be hurled at Belle's head, who, to escape, had flown to the other end of the dining-room!

"Is he always so?" she asked, when a little quiet had been restored.

"Oh no," replied Mabel, laughing, "he merely requires a formal introduction."

Katy now took him in her arms, and with his thumb in his mouth, he gazed aggrievedly and steadily at Belle, until she had finished her lunch.

"How about Arthur Cummings, Belle?" enquired Mabel.

"I do not admire him altogether, and just now I'm in something of a dilemma."

"What's that?"

"The other day he sent me two beautifully bound volumes of Tennyson; would you acknowledge them?"

"I should never hurt anyones feelings if I could help it," answered Mabel.

"It might lead him on."

"Not the ordinary civilities of life; and I should think Arthur Cummings too much of a gentleman, and too well bred, to take politeness for encouragement, and the latter, Belle, your own conscience must regulate.

Belle looked perplexed and shook her head doubtfully, the long gold ear-rings swaying in unison.

"We must away to the painting of the dinner cards," cried Mabel, "I was in the midst of them when you arrived. There are but six more to finish."

"What is the number of your guests."

"Ten; one cannot conveniently manage more at a dinner. Hester Stedman has declined."

"What's getting into these Langdons; they are refusing right and left."

"I have replaced her by Louisa Bronson. Belle, I will let you finish Lord Dun Donald's card."

"Very well, and as I hear he is a little imperious I will write under it, 'Kind hearts are more than coronets.'"

"And I will paint a tea rose on Dan's," said Mabel;

"he tells me it is his favorite flower. The last one I will give you, Reuben Langdon! for I know you are dying to have him!"

"Mabel, is that a double entendre's '*Comme tu veux?*'"

"Do you think him handsome?" Belle continued.

"*Distingué* and aristocratic looking, undoubtedly," replied Mabel. "And his nose is perfect, no sculptor's chisel could cut a more beautiful one; then I like that fair complexion; it harmonizes so well with his light hair and blonde moustache."

"It's immense," rejoined Belle. Belle was not very far off from thirty, and she was determined this year should bring about the happy event in her life, and she made up her mind that Reuben Langdon should be the man.

"It would be an excellent thing for him," thought Belle. "He is poor, and my money would come in splendidly."

"I'm a little afraid of Mabel Singleton; men go on so foolishly over her; and yet think, with my dashing style and music, too, who could hesitate a moment!"

"I think our Englishmen would not be highly flattered, if they knew how much thought and conversation has been given to Reuben Langdon," remarked Mabel.

"Oh but," returned Belle, "they are entirely beyond our reach."

"I don't know that," said Mabel, laughingly.

"Lord Dun Donald I hear '*est promis*', as the French

say, and Dan I don't think worth trying for, Mabel." And then she added, (and this time without ths slightest shadow of truth,) "there has been a report that Reuben Langdon is engaged. But you see I do not put the slightest faith in it."

"To whom?" said Mabel, and she leaned over her palette a little more closely to darken her color.

"An English girl."

"More than probable," rejoined Mabel. "He has lived there for many years, you know."

"His sister contradicts it stoutly," returned Belle. "She says that he has never even alluded to it."

"That would be no evidence of its falsity," replied Mabel.

There was silence for a few moments. Belle musing over the effect of her fib, and Mabel of this last piece of intelligence.

"Well," thought Mable, "she has disposed of two already—Lord Dun Donald and Mr. Langdon,—who will come next? Yet I am inclined to believe in this last assertion; heigh ho!"

"Now I will wind up by painting a card for Katy," exclaimed Mabel.

"You think a good deal of that little girl."

"Yes, I misunderstood her at first; thought the little thing lacked heart. But Paul said to me one day, 'Cousin Mabel, I am sure you don't know what a dear

little girl you have in your house! Her heart is almost broken though, yearning for her mother's love and care. Thrown in among us, strangers as it were, and not one relative by blood!'

"My heart smote me at once, Belle, and I said, 'Oh! how thoughtless I've been. Where is she?' and I went directly in search of her, and found her in her room standing by the window. 'Katy darling,' I said, 'can Aunt Mabel do anything for you?'

"She looked up, and I saw she had been crying.

"'My own dear little girl; come here. I know you miss your mamma,' and I took her in my arms Belle, for she is a small, little thing, and pressed her head with its golden hair close to my cheek, and we both wept together.

"'Aunt Mabel, is it hard to love me?' she asked.

"'No, dear,' I answered, 'think how Robbie loves you. I believed you so happy. I did not know you wanted Aunt Mabel's love!' I felt wretchedly. I thought if God should take me, and my Robbie left among strangers. And then I thought of dear Paul, what a loving sympathetic heart he had; how considerate and kind he had ever been to her, and I felt sorely reproved."

"Poor child," exclaimed Belle, sympathisingly.

"'I am so lonely at night,' she went on to say.

"'Are you, darling,' I answered. 'I shall have a

little cot put up in Elsi's room, and you shall sleep there. Would you like that?'

"To think, Belle, night after night in her room alone! No fond mother to bend over her and murmur soft words of love, and a blessing! A lonely orphan on whom no lingering kiss fell! She is growing so lovely, too. I was looking at her yesterday evening, as she sat writing her French exercises. There was such a sweet light in her eyes, as she looked up. I hardly know how to express it, and her complexion so transparent. I began to tremble lest she might not be long for this earth!"

"Oh that is common with children," rejoined Belle, "I know plenty of them with just such complexions. Look at my own! Don't worry yourself into any useless frights and fears. And do you know it is just three-quarters of an hour to your grand dinner?"

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mabel.

And they caught up the cards and rushed to the dining room, and hurriedly placed them around the table.

"Engaged!" mused Mabel as she walked slowly along the hall to her room. "How strange I never thought of it before!"

* * * * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Churchill stood waiting upon the piazza to drive Lord Dun Donald and Dan in their open carriage to Mrs. Singleton's dinner.

Mr. Churchill had enough of the Englishman in him,

to pride himself on his fine horses, and handled the ribbons with a good deal of ease and skill.

Lord Dun Donald sat on the front seat with him, and Dan and Mrs. Churchill behind. The young Englishmen were in fine spirits. They had been fêted and lionized in her Majesty's Dominion to their heart's content, and had had altogether quite "a lark," as they termed it.

Dan's spirits rose high at the thought of again meeting Mrs. Singeleton. And much attention had been bestowed in selecting the color of his silk socks, and arranging the tie of his white cravat. He had kept them waiting some minutes, until he had found the choicest tea rose in the green house, which was carefully placed in his button hole, and later in the evening was seen in Mabel Singleton's belt.

There had been a heavy shower which had settled the dust, and brought out the sweet fragrance of the new mown hay, as they drove along.

Mr. Churchill with pride, swept past some of the beautiful private residences, and roused their English apathy, for Dan exclaimed, "'Pon my word, quite pretty, quite fair!" or, "Fancy, Oswald, living there!" As they would pass some farmer's modest home by the wayside

CHAPTER XI.

REUBEN LANGDON entered Mrs. Singleton's drawing room, punctually at seven, with no small amount of happiness, and an ease and composure he had often put on but rarely so truly and heartily felt as now. Mrs. Singleton might call it "English assurance," but with an income of twenty to thirty thousand dollars, what had he to do with diffidence and embarrassment, provided he was upright and true. After bowing to Mrs. Singleton and the ladies, Lord Dun Donald advanced with his hands out exclaiming:

"Ah! Langdon, my dear boy, I am too glad to see you."

"Oh I say," cried Dan coming forward, "old fellow, how are you?"

Reuben returned their greeting most cordially, and then perceiving the servant at the door announcing dinner, and a move being made in that direction, he offered his arm to the little blonde, Miss Bronson, who stood near him, and found himself seated at the table between Miss Travers and herself.

A large, lighted chandelier shed a soft light over the the magnificent silver and china that adorned the table.

Before the guests had read their names and taken their seats, Miss Travers exclaimed:

"Mr. Langdon, I am impatient to know what you think of the painting on your cards."

"I cannot but admire it," answered Reuben taking it up and closely examining it. "It is artistically executed."

She was interrupted from proceeding further by Dan, who, having taken her in, felt, no doubt, it was his exclusive privilege to enlist her attention.

The entire company now became animated and conversational, and the rooms echoed with the sounds of merriment and laughter. Reuben Langdon often looked at Mabel Singleton. Her dress was soft and white, he had always observed she rejected gay colors, and did ample justice to her faultless figure. He compared her to her guests. What was Belle Travers' dashing and brilliant style to that quite composed demeanor and lovely face? He had always judged of character by the voice, and hers was low and sweet. But her indifferent acception of his attentions was the least attraction of all.

"Churchill," called out Lord Dun Donald, "can you tell me the name of that building, college or something in New York; the corner, I think of Forty-ninth street and Madison?"

"Columbia College," suggested Mr. Langdon.

"Perhaps Dun Donald," cried out Churchill, "I could assist your memory in the future by recalling to your

mind a boat race that took place between your boys of Oxford and ours of this very college. If you remember, the Columbian boys came off victorious."

"Oh I say," he cried, "that's hard on us now," and again remarked, "Langdon, is there much drinking in America?"

"Yes, quite a good deal, I think, but not as heavy as in England."

"Is it inherited, think you?"

"Decidedly not." What inheritance is that, if you never see it, you never want it! Other maladies break out with the greatest ease and precaution, but you are in fine health and strength until urged to taste the first glass."

"'Pon my word, Langdon, I had not thought of that," remarked Dan, "but fancy, you are quite right."

Mr. Langdon spoke with warmth, and quite as much in answer to Mrs. Singleton's earnest look of inquiry as to Lord Dun Donald's question. "You rarely see the daughters of an inebriate drink."

"Why is that, may I ask?" said his lordship.

"Their temptations are less, and that cruel custom of treating and being treated is not permissible with them."

"I declare, Langdon," called out Dan, "you'll have proved it before I've finished my ice."

"Proved what?" inquired inattentive Miss Travers.

"That drinking is not hereditary," replied Dan.

"How droll!" she replied, readjusting her bangles, and seemingly unconscious of the information when given.

Reuben had observed more than once her distracted manner during the dinner, and imagined she was more brilliant at the piano or in her Terpsichorean revels. With the little blonde on his left he was more fortunate, though often responded to by short giggles and exclamations of, "Oh, Mr. Langdon, you do sing, now; I've heard you. You are joking; really you are."

The ladies now arose and adjourned to the drawing-room, and it was not long before the gentlemen were summoned by hearing a most beautiful "voluntary," made up of reminiscences of the *chef d'œuvres* of the greatest masters.

It was Miss Travers. Seated in stately dignity at the piano, with her showy dress falling in graceful folds around her, she was dashing on, perfectly at home, from one grand burst of harmony into the softest and tenderest melody.

"Isn't it splendid!" said little Miss Bronson.

It was admiration Belle sought, and she now deservedly received it in full measure.

Lord Dun Donald and Dan closed around the piano, calling for piece after piece, Dan exclaiming, "'Pon my word! By Jove, where's her competitor!"

At last she concluded with some brilliant aria, and

rose from her seat thoroughly satisfied. But they would not listen to it, and called loudly for a song.

Miss Travers laughed and hesitated, and finally commenced a lively accompaniment to a little spirited English song, "Oh, when it is too late, thou wilt regret me."

Coffee was now brought in, and the music was abandoned to hold friendly little conversations with each other.

Some wandered up and down the rooms, bent over the tables and examined books and flowers. The gentlemen, with one exception, withdrew to talk politics. Dan, with coffee cup in hand, took the vacant seat by Mrs. Singleton.

"What," he exclaimed, "cream and sugar!" as he placed them in her delicate Sevres cup. "Fancy now, how odd!"

"Yes," she replied, "only club men and dyspeptics go without.

"Oh, Mrs. Singleton, you are chaffing."

"I assure you, I am perfectly honest in my opinion."

"This day week," he continued, with a slight trembling in his voice, "we will be in mid Atlantic."

"And I hope," she replied, looking calmly at him, "you will carry home with you pleasant memories of our country and people."

"I shall carry back but one memory, but one thought,"

he rejoined, gazing tenderly into her face, and coloring up to the roots of his almost flaxen hair.

"Oh," thought Mabel, "what will he say next! Will no one come to my rescue?"

In his excitement he appeared almost kneeling, for he had slipped partly from his seat, and Mabel caught sight of a pump and silk stocking thrust far beyond her chair.

"Can you, will you," he excitedly faltered out, "give me hope and love?"

"I cannot; indeed, I cannot," firmly but kindly responded Mabel, and with that sad tenderness a true woman always feels for the man that has loved her in vain.

Here George Churchill opportunely came up and whispered something in Mabel's ear, putting an end to the painful interview. Dan dejectedly rose and walked off.

"Don't give yourself any further uneasiness, George," replied Mabel to his whisper. "He is engaged, and Paul saw him receive a foreign letter to-day in a lady's hand-handwriting."

"Then she is dead," he exclaimed, "for the seal was black, and, begad! it must be an immense relief, for I never saw him look happier than he does to-night!"

"How unkind and unfeeling you are, George! But, at all events," thought Mabel, "the report has given me less restraint, and I am more at my ease in his society."

"Mabel," said Miss Travers, walking in the direction where Mrs. Singleton was standing, and also turning and addressing Mr. Langdon, "we are talking of a moonlight ride on horseback; won't it be jolly? Will you and Mr. Langdon join us?"

"Delightful!" exclaimed Reuben, "and the moon, I think, has completed her second quarter, and if we have a fair evening and a cloudless sky, it will be as light as day, and far more beautiful."

"And, Mr. Langdon," said Mabel, "Guy is an excellent saddle horse, and, if you like, you are perfectly welcome to him."

"Thank you," replied Reuben, "you are very kind, but I prefer riding my own."

"There's a bomb shell!" thought Langdon. "How it escaped my lips I cannot tell, and would give a five pound note to recall it."

Reuben had that very morning, on returning from his father's house completed the negotiations for purchasing a bay mare belonging to a friend and which he had for some time desired. The price had been the only obstacle in the way; this being now removed, he became the owner of "Melody" renowned for her beauty and speed.

Lord Dun Donald's eyes had wandered uneasily from time to time in the direction where Mrs. Singleton and Dan had been sitting in earnest conversation. Half suspecting Dan's intentions, and fully aware of his suscep-

tible disposition, he feared some fiasco of a tender nature might be the result.

"These Americans talk of the phlegmatic character of the Englishman thought his lordship; if it is so, I wish to heavens Dan possessed it to-night, for in matters of the heart I am sure no American can rival him. Had he the slightest chance, I should be too happy to aid him, and too proud to call Mrs. Singleton my sister, for she is not only beautiful, but what we Englishmen would call 'a womanly woman'—one I could love myself, were it not"—and here his lordship sighed.

Miss Travers, now drawing near, threw herself in a soft cushioned chair and interrupted his thoughts by exclaiming, "Lord Dun Donald do you see any music in that light-headed blonde over there?"

"No," answered his lordship. "I have never seen it, or heard it, in any one but yourself."

Belle tittered, flapping her fan backward and forward, and strove to look unconscious. "I was going to add, if so, we might have a waltz; I am dying for one."

"I say, isn't it too warm for such violent exercise?" his lordship inquired.

"What, with this lovely breeze from that open window stirring the fringe of my dress as I sit here? dear no! And I shall start them at once."

Away she flew to the piano, sat down and commenced a rolicksome waltz, compressing her under lip, and keep-

ing her eyes fastened steadily and fixedly on the chandelier suspended over her head.

Mrs. Singleton perceiving with her usual forethought that Miss Travers was the only musician present, sent for Katy whom she said, played waltzes very sweetly."

Reuben was glad to see his little pet enter, and heard Mrs. Singleton, as she met her at the door, stoop down and ask if "Robbie was all right?"

"Sleeping sweetly," was the answer. Then Katy walked timidly over to the piano and sat down. Her blue silk stockings contrasted well with the dress she wore, and a neat little foot "*bien chaussé*" just reaching the pedal. She played as sweetly, and in as perfect time, as many a more experienced hand.

Miss Travers stood near, counting the measure and beating time with her foot.

Reuben feared her correct ear might intimidate Katy, but not so; she ran her slim little fingers over the keys as composedly as Miss Travers herself could have done.

He was congratulating himself Mrs. Singleton did not waltz. But looking up after placing some books under Katy, she gracefully and quietly glided by as Lord Dun Donald's partner. He was surprised not to see Dan in the field, but was told by Churchill he was pacing the grounds.

Reuben Langdon had been fretted and annoyed in watching his attentions to Mabel Singleton, and had also

worked himself into the belief that she received them quite kindly. He felt relieved, however, that it was not Lord Dun Donald, who would have proved a more dangerous rival. His new accessions were almost forgotten in this late vexation, and he found himself experiencing some very uncomfortable and painful sensations.

Mrs. Singleton now paused in the waltz, and as she drew near him, exclaimed, "Are you admiring that basket of roses, Mr. Langdon?

"Yes," he replied, "roses in August are like hidden treasures."

"Not always; I have them blooming for me until late in October."

"Is that one in your belt?"

Mabel slightly colored, and drawing it from her girdle, she threw it into an empty Faience dish at her side.

This gave Langdon fresh hope and heart, and his spirits rose accordingly.

"I hear you sing," she said, "and am here to request a song."

"I do sing, Mrs. Singleton, a little; chiefly ballads; but will you excuse me to-night?"

Her eyes met his as she spoke, but she quickly averted her head, replying, "I did not think you would disappoint me. How can he," she reflected moving off, "love another woman and look at me as he does? Did I be-

lieve him a flirt, I should despise him. However, I shall wait for stronger proof than Belle Travers' report."

"I am going to give you all a surprise," called out Mrs. Singleton, as she quickly glided from the room, returning with Miss Travers' banjo in hand. "Now," she cried out, "we must wind up with 'The old man isn't what he used to was;' and you Belle must act the old man!"

"Oh yes," they all exclaimed, Lord Dun Donald's voice reiterating the request.

"Where is poor Dan?" thought Mabel as she sorrowfully looked around.

Miss Travers at first decidedly declined, and yet put out her jewelled hand. Langdon placed the banjo in it. "Shall I?" she said, looking archly up in his face.

"Undoubtedly," he answered, "nothing do I enjoy more, and I am sure the entire company will like African melodies.

"Look," said Churchill in a whisper to his wife, "Belle's playing the kitten now."

"It's her natural manner, George. She had it from childhood."

"Is snubbing her brother natural, too?"

"You are uncharitable to-night," she answered reproachfully.

Miss Travers gracefully seated herself, placed the banjo firmly in her lap, and with her thumb ran the

strings down, and sounded the chords with a twang that startled little Miss Bronson from her seat and her bang from her forehead. A good-sized slippered foot appeared from underneath her dress, beating time to the air she played. Her execution and powers of mimicry were astonishing; and, when she concluded, the guests clapped and encored. But she threw the instrument down, and positively refused to take it up again. This was not surprising, for had not her musical powers been sufficiently tested for one night.

The old clock in the hall sounded out midnight, reminding the guests of the lateness of the hour, and they at once sought their scarfs and hats.

The Englishmen were to take their departure for the old country in the morning, and they said their farewells —Dan opportunely appearing—with evident sorrow and reluctance.

"I say, Dan," said his lordship, when they found themselves alone in their room preparing to retire, "did you make an ass of yourself to-night?"

"I did," replied Dan. "*Bon nuit.*"

CHAPTER XII.

"MOTHER, are we rich or poor now?" inquired Paul, as they passed down from the piazza across the lawn to the adjoining wood. Mrs. Churchill did not wonder at the question. Her husband being a speculator in mining stocks, they lived entirely on the chances and fluctuations of the stock exchange; at times in affluence and even extravagance; and then again with the strictest care and economy.

Constantly handling large sums of money, and as often losing as making fortunes, Mr. Churchill gave but very little thought or care to their reverse periods; looking upon them as of short duration, and generally he was almost immediately filled in with larger sums than ever.

Not so with Paul, who, unlike his father, knew the value of dollars and cents, and though generous to a fault, could not look with patience on such a shiftless mode of living.

"Mother," he would often say, "why don't you, when there is a rise in the market, get the money from father, and snug it away against a rainy day?"

Paul now saw they were suffering under some sort of depression, which gave rise to the above remark.

"Your father has lost heavily within the last week, but is as hopeful and buoyant as ever."

"It is the meanest way of making money. I call it right down gambling. I know you'll not listen to it, mother, and say it is legal and all that, but you do not like it. I have often seen a pained expression on your face when father has excitedly boasted of some great gains. I have often begged him to give it up, too."

"What did he say, dear?"

"Soon, very soon. But just now I'm salting down, so that you and your mother can live in comfort and ease all your days."

"Salting down," thought Mrs. Churchill, "when only last night he knew not where to borrow to commence operations again."

"Now that party! What a useless piece of extravagance."

"It was," answered his mother.

"Entirely unnecessary," he continued. "Was it not enough to have entertained Lord Dun Donald and his brother hospitably and handsomely, in your own house, without such a display and waste as that? Why, it must have cost one thousand dollars, at least. I know it did, for I took particular pains to inquire."

"I had proof of that," thought his mother.

"It is such a pitiable way of living, too," he went on; "one day twenty dollars in your pocket, and for months not a red."

"You have no money now, Paul?"

"Not a cent, but don't you worry, dear mother."

This avowal distressed Mrs. Churchill beyond anything. She had no means of her own, and often suffered, as Paul now did. To be without it, she knew no greater deprivation.

"You should certainly have an allowance," she added.

"If possible, I think so, mother. The other day I wanted to buy Katy some painted flowers and was mortified not to have a dollar to do it with—every one thinking us rich too!"

Mrs. Churchill walked on in silence and reflected. "Aunt Lyddy has but a few hundreds a year. *Most* certainly nothing should be expected from that quarter, dearly as she loves Paul. What I want is something permanent to depend upon." At length arriving at some conclusion—perhaps to part with some of her diamonds—for her face brightened and she looked up and exclaimed, "Would six dollars a week answer, Paul?"

He thought she had struck rather high, but replied, "First rate." Then his natural prudence and caution gaining the ascendency, he added, "Better make it five, mother; that is over two hundred a year, and when I go to college you can raise it as much as you like."

"You have everything else you want, in other ways I mean, Paul. That beautiful horse now that your father bought you."

"Yes, mother, but with father's propensity for speculating, he may part with him any moment."

"Oh Paul, what an unkind thought. Not what is yours, and a gift too!"

"I'm not so sure of that," he replied, shaking his head doubtfully.

"I hope Aunt Lyddy will hold fast to hers," remarked Mrs. Churchill with a sigh.

"We may all yet have to live upon her," rejoined Paul.

"You are too young, dear, to take such dark views of life." Then she strove to cheer him a little, for she felt their unequal manner of living was depressing and even mortifying to one of his sensitive refined nature.

"Remember the gun, Paul. This time I want you to have the best that's made."

"Good!" exclaimed Paul.

Glad to see him smile, she went on. "You spoke of one in particuler; do you remember where?"

"Oh yes, I know just where to go; Pat Mullers in Maiden Lane. He is one of the best makers in New York."

"Then I will hand you the check Christmas week, and I know it will be a pleasant errand to New York."

"Mother, you are always doing something for me," and Paul's eyes filled with tears.

"How can I help it," thought Mrs. Churchill. "Mr.

Langdon tells me he is one of the most generous, loving fellows he ever met with; and then, what would our home be without him?"

"Mother, Mr. Langdon often talks to me of the bad habit of drinking."

This remark was the result of a kind heart and to allay any unnecessary solicitude his mother might have once felt on his account. She knew it and blessed him for it.

"I don't like that Belle Travers," he went on to say. "The other day she told cousin Mabel she thought Mr. Langdon had kept up the farce of teaching long enough. I asked her what she meant by a farce? being faithful and true to his engagement?"

"'I was not addressing you,' she replied. Now I call that impudent; don't you mother?"

"Belle is quick," rejoined Mrs. Churchill. "It would have been better, however, if you had allowed your cousin Mabel to have answered."

"Oh the airs she puts on with Mr. Langdon! I know she is dead in love with him; and more than ever since his wealth. But I know someting!"

"What Paul?"

"Never mind; it is *not* Miss Travers, though! Yesterday afternoon in the French class he was bending over cousin Mabel, correcting her dictée; and mother, I knew well enough he was pleased to remain there. When

Miss Travers cried out, 'Come over here! come over here! You have not looked at mine yet!'"

"What then, Paul?"

"Oh, he had to leave of course."

"Paul had we not better think of returning? These September evenings become quite chilly as it grows late."

"Stay a little while longer. I love to look up into this cloudless sky and watch the stars come out through the deep blue. Do you see that lone one, mother, looking down so kindly upon us? How far, far away it seems."

"I always feel nearer to God, gazing into His beautiful Home, studded with jewels," replied his mother. "I then feel what power and strength is there, to save what He has made."

"Oh, what would I not give to know He sees and hears us now," cried Paul, fervently.

"As if He who made the eye could not see; the ear, and could not hear!" replied his mother.

* * * * * * *

"Have you heard the last?" exclaimed Belle as she flew excitedly into Mabel's room, unbuttoning her gloves and throwing them down on the table. "Reuben Langdon has been left a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds! And the evening of your dinner party he had the consciousness of enjoying the intelligence all to him-

self, for it was that evening he received the news ! Did you ever hear of anything being kept so quiet ? Nearly three months—I think, we have been sold ! "

" Where did you hear it ? " enquired Mabel.

" In at Muler's worsted store. Louise Bronson was there and gave me all the particulars."

Poor Belle ! She now felt her strongest and imaginary attraction, money, had slipped away from her in Reuben Langdon's eyes. And she swept from the room indignant at the uncle, his death, and his fortune !

Not so Mabel—far differently did she interpret the silence. " He has shown no anxiety," she thought, " to leave Oakland and return to England to claim the woman he loves." And there was an undercurrent of joy that quickly coursed through her whole being, bringing to her face an expression of happiness and hope she had not known for many days. But immediately returned other and sadder thoughts.

" Why should I wish to begin life anew ; I have seen too many changes to wish for more. I should be happy and content with my present life, and ask for nothing else. Besides, there is Robbie, my darling precious Robbie ; is he not enough to live for ? I should think of him—live for him—not for myself. Motherhood and its cares and pleasures should be my first thoughts now —and yet, I am young ! "

Poor Mabel, there was no use in reasoning ; deep in her heart she knew she loved Reuben Langdon.

Suddenly the door was pushed aside and Belle's face thrust through.

"Mabel, you can understand now, why I prefer riding my own horse." Then as quickly closed, and she disappeared.

"Poor Belle," thought Mabel, "with all her faults I love her, and they are principally due to a foolish over indulgent mother, who only lives to obey the will she ought to have conquered. Her style and handsome figure have brought her many admirers, and now for the first time she is amazed at the delay or tardiness, as she calls it, in Reuben Langdon's attentions. Lately I have thought the truth was dawning upon her. I wish it might, and that she would bestow her affections elsewhere. I cannot bear to have her suffer, and mine the hand that may deal the blow!

"Mr. Langdon's patience and kindness to her I have often admired, when there were times I knew he longed to make his escape—at least I have thought so. And then again, I've seen that careless off hand manner of hers draw him to her side. He talks of leaving," she went on reflecting, "the first of November. Scarcely one month more at Oakland. How I shall miss him. Those little attentions throughout all my coldness of manner—he never wearied giving! Then his delicacy in regard to his great wealth—never by the slightest chance possible alluding to it excepting once!" and here

Mabel smiled, thinking of Belle's indignation. "What long pleasant talks I've had with him. Enjoying his humour, too, of which he is so happily endowed. He cannot be engaged. Oh Belle, Belle, have you burdened your conscience with a falsehood—and what was it for? I am beginning to doubt your word! When next he raises his eyes to mine and gives me a glance which to speack truth thrills me with delight, I shall take the Bull by the Horns, and beg him to tell me a tale of love—his own—far away over the deep blue sea."

CHAPTER XIII.

THOUGH the last day of September, the air was close and sultry, and just before tea Mabel dressed and walked down to the piazza for a little fresh air. She looked over on the lawn and saw Katy and Robbie seeking among the grass for the few remaining dandelions, and Katy blowing them into fantastic curls and mingling them in and out of Robbie's own bright natural ones.

"Don't carry him, Katy," she called out. "He's becoming too heavy for you! Dear little thing," she thought, I ought to think a great deal of her, if it is only for the love she bears my baby boy." She saw Mr. Langdon and Paul in the distance, but they came up so noiselessly and suddenly that Belle who was reclining under a tree did not perceive them until they were close upon her, and she heard the evening salutation.

"I wonder if he will come directly to me," thought Mabel, "or join Belle." He looked over and bowed, but took the vacant seat by Belle.

It cannot be very distasteful to a man to have a fine, handsome girl go into foolish ecstacies over him, and though he may not be able to return the admiration, still it flatters, and very few are strong enough to resist

it, unless the object creates an antipathy which was not in the present case.

"There seems an unusual amount of happiness about him this autumn evening," thought Mabel. "Can it be a white-winged messenger from afar over the sea?"

How few escape the green-eyed monster!

"What were you reading so attentively, Miss Travers?" asked Reuben, taking a seat beside her, "as Paul and myself approached you?"

"Oh, you cannot, you shall not see," cried Belle, rising from her seat and placing the book firmly under her, and then down upon it with a vengeance.

"Do not give yourself too much inconvenience," he replied, "I'm no hard master, or stern parent, that shall insist upon seeing what I am not permitted to see."

"Were I not aware of your tight-laced views and principles, and Sunday too, I should have no scruples."

"What bosh!" muttered Paul, and walked off.

"Now you have given me a clue;" returned Reuben, "one of Miss Braddon's last?"

Belle felt sure he had seen the title, still she fought it out. "You cannot tempt me," she said, "to change my first intention. I believe in the law of the Medes and Persians, 'Which altereth not.'"

"Yes, I've always found you constant." Reuben feared his words might have implied more than he intended to convey, but Miss Travers apparently did not heed them and went on.

"Mr. Langdon, do you believe in presentiments?"

"I cannot say that I do."

"I cannot banish it from my mind. I am troubled about it," (talking slowly and with her eyes half closed,) "a presentiment of evil this *very night* is before me—and we are all somewhat affected by it."

"This is becoming interesting, Miss Travers; of what nature? Fires, easthquakes, cyclones or aching hearts?"

"Aching hearts! I don't believe you have one to ache!"

Belle was not slow in detecting the constant inattentive look and wandering of his eyes to the piazza where Mabel stood, and while she was anxiously awaiting a reply to her accusation, he was watching Mabel Singleton as she gracefully approached them.

"What are you all talking so animatedly about?" exclaimed Mabel, as she and Paul drew near.

"I am accused of having no heart, Mrs. Singleton; will you not interfere in my behalf?" asked Reuben.

"Oh yes, I will be much more amiable than that! You had one, but have lost possession of it."

Reuben looked puzzled, and turning around unexpectedly, saw Miss Travers shake her head at Mrs. Singleton. He was more mystified than ever.

"Can I have an explanation?" he asked, looking from one to the other.

"I see the last daisy of summer," Miss Travers ex-

claimed, anxious to change the subject. "Let me capture it and tell your fortune, Mr. Langdon."

"May I trust it?"

"No," answered Miss Travers, who had been trying that afternoon for herself, but with no flattering results. "Shall I tell yours?"

"I thought you had already disposed of mine!"

"Not beyond recall; not irrevocably yet," said Mabel, laughing.

"Now, Mr. Langdon," exclaimed Miss Travers, "hereon hangs a tale. Give great attention and think of the one you love best."

All eyes were now centred upon Miss Travers, foremost among them Paul, taking a good position to see his friend's fortune through to the end.

Miss Travers now began slowly pulling leaf after leaf, and repeating to herself, "Elle m'aime, elle ne m'aime pas," and so on until she came to the last leaf.

"Quick," called out Langdon, "do not keep me in suspense any longer. Does she love me, or does she not?"

"No;" said Miss Travers, looking up in his face triumphantly.

"Now, Miss Belle, you ought to be ashamed," cried out Paul. "I counted every leaf after you began with 'elle m'aime' and it did not come out, no!"

"Hush, Paul," said Mrs. Singleton, in a side whisper, and Reuben looked imploringly at him to say no more.

Miss Travers cast an indignant glance, but disdained to take any further notice of it.

The servant appeared now and announced tea. The clouds had been gathering for some time, and the big drops were falling. Mrs. Singleton and Miss Travers caught up their trains and with Mr. Langdon hurried to the house. Paul, Katy, and Robbie came frolicking and laughing behind. Robbie thinking it a game of 'tag,' they were all playing.

As they passed from the hall into the tea room, Reuben saw Mr. and Mrs. Churchill at the library window, and before Mrs. Singleton had time to accost them, he said in a low tone to her, "I must have an explanation for your words, 'That my heart is already disposed of.' I am not prepared to deny it; but to whom?"

"It turns towards England, I believe," she replied.

"Towards England! There's not a word of truth in it!"

"Why did you not let me know you were here? Of course you will stay to tea," said Mrs. Singleton, addressing Mr. and Mrs. Churchill.

"Such was our intention," replied Mr. Churchill.

"And we preferred watching a very pretty picture from the window, of fortune telling, to interrupting it," added Mrs. Churchill.

"I hope it was satisfactory all around," exclaimed Churchill.

"We had but one daisy," answered Reuben; "and, if there is any truth in its prediction, I should have far preferred to have left it to perish with its companions, alone."

"Tea, I believe, is ready," interrupted Mrs. Singleton; and, aside to Katy, "will you coax Robbie up to bed?"

"He wants a lump of sugar," pleaded Katy.

"It is such a bad habit," returned Mabel.

"If you don't," said Robbie, "I sit here all evening."

"Well, only a small piece this time; do you hear, Robbie?"

But Robbie did not appear to have an idea beyond the sugar he was rolling in his mouth. When that was disposed of, he caught sight of the cake basket.

"You once said on Sundays I could always have cake, and Katy said this was Sunday."

"I did," said Mabel, looking worried beyond measure, and breaking off a small piece and handing it to him.

"Hurry him off, quick, Katy, before any thing else comes up," and Mrs. Singleton made her escape to the tea room.

"I am sorry to have kept you all waiting," she exclaimed, on her return. "Will you come in at once, and sit down?"

Paul found his seat as usual by Katy. Mrs. Churchill sat on Mabel's left; Reuben sought the vacant chair on her right, but was forestalled by Miss Travers; and Mr.

Churchill presided. There were seven at the table—an uneven number, by many supposed to be indicative of good luck—but Mrs. Churchill recalled with pleasure that in the Divine reckoning it also implied fullness and completeness, with nothing left out. Often in the past did her thoughts revert back to that pleasant, cheerful tea table, and the interesting and appropriate turn the conversation took for Sunday evening.

Mrs. Churchill was the first to remark, "Mr. Langdon, how did you like the sermon this morning?"

"Very much; it is always a subject that interests me, 'The Second Coming of Christ.'"

"Do you believe in it?" inquired Miss Travers.

"Most assuredly," answered Reuben.

"Many believe it is a spiritual coming; Christ *reigning* in the hearts of all true believers," remarked Mrs. Singleton.

"The words of the Bible appear to me very explicit in regard to His personal reign," said Reuben.

"There are nearly, if not quite, three hundred and eighteen verses that bear upon it in some measure," observed Mrs. Churchill.

"What, all in the New Testament?" exclaimed Belle.

"Old and New included," returned Mrs. Churchill.

"Tell us exactly where to find them?" asked Miss Travers.

"In Thessalonians: 'For the Lord himself shall de-

scend from heaven with a shout,' etc. And those comforting words in St. John, fourteenth chapter, that everyone is familiar with "—

"Oh, yes," said Belle.

—"If I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come and receive you.' But there are so many," said Mrs. Churchill, "I could not begin to quote them all to you."

"I had never thought of it," said Belle; "it startles me."

"There is nothing to dread about it, I assure you, Miss Travers; but, I should think, great cause for rejoicing," answered Mr. Langdon.

"Yes," rejoined Mabel, "for will He not dwell here on earth a thousand years first?"

"Yes," and Isaiah says: "*Then* the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," said Mrs. Churchill.

"What happiness for all those that are living then, not to see death," remarked Belle.

"Yes; and to think, 'Every eye shall see Him; and they also which pierced Him,'" observed Reuben.

"Mamma used to read, 'My kingdom is not of this world,'" said Katy, timidly, who had been listening, with her eyes wide open.

"Yes, Katy," answered Mr. Langdon. "That means, 'Not of the spirit of the world, as they who truly believe are not of the world.'"

"The old phrophets all prophesied of His first coming and second coming," said Paul. "His first coming was in literal fulfillment of prophecy, and why should not we expect His second coming to be in literal fulfillment of prophecy?"

His father and mother looked with proud and loving eyes upon him.

"I am sometimes lost in astonishment," said Mrs. Churchill, "when I think how exactly the manner of His first coming was predicted and *fulfilled*."

"How?" said Belle, becoming more and more interested.

"Isaiah, in the seventh chapter and fourteenth verse, speaks of His being born of a virgin.—In Micah, at Bethlehem. Hosea, that He was called out of Egypt; and, in Isaiah, fiftieth chapter, that He was spit upon and scourged; and, in Zachariah it says, that He was sold for thirty pieces of silver."

"What wonderful predictions," remarked Mrs. Singleton.

"They did not spiritualize His first coming, and why should we His second coming," added Mrs. Churchill.

"Many think the world must be perfect first," remarked Mrs. Singleton.

"That appears to me quite an error," said Reuben. "'Antichrist is to be destroyed by the brightness of His coming.' This would indicate sin on earth at His second

appearing. Then again, 'the tares and the wheat shall grow together until the harvest,' as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be at the second coming of man."

"Mother, you know something about the 'time,' tell it," said Paul.

"The day and the hour no man knowest, Paul. But there are two events which must precede the coming of our Lord and which will indicate His approach," answered his mother. The partial return of the Jews to their old home, Jerusalem, and the rise of Antichrist. The return of the Jews has commenced. There are now many thousands when a few years since there were not as many hundreds."

"Mother, what about the close of the six thousand years? I love to hear about that," said Paul in a whisper to Katy.

"Irenæus, who died nearly two hundred years after Christ, and John Bunyan also, I think, said, 'As God took six days in the works of creation,—that is six thousand years—for a day with the Lord is as a thousaud years—so in six thousand years 'He will complete His providences that concern this world; will finish the travail of His saints, the burden of beasts, the curse of the ground, and bring all into rest for a thousand years!' We are probably very nearly at the end of six thousand years from the creation of Adam, and on the very dawn

of the seventh thousand years that shall constitute the world's sabbath."

"Many among the early fathers maintained this belief," said Reuben,—Augustine, Justin Martyn, Origen, Jerome, etc. And in later times, Luther, Melanchthon, Newton, Wesley, and many others."

"I do not wonder people are beginning to be thougtful and serious," remarked Mrs. Singleton.

"I wish I never had a doubt respecting the authority of the Scriptures," observed Churchill.

"You never would have," replied Langdon, "if you studied them. The Bible contains its own evidence. Would that every doubter would make the experiment. A faith thus gained rests not on the wisdom of men but on the demonstration of the Spirit."

"If some wonderful miracle would take place now," exclaimed Belle, "the whole world would spring to their feet and believe!"

"Believe, Miss Travers!" exclaimed Reuben, "why, we live in miracles. The seed in the ground, the fruit-tree, the springing grass, sunlight, moonlight, all outrival any miracle! But familiarty so dulls our senses we will not see; we will not believe!"

"Don't let us talk about it any longer," said Belle. "I shall not be able to sleep to-night."

"I expect, Miss Travers," said Churchill, "if I should repeat Mother Shipton's prophesy to you, published in

1485 and re-published in 1641, you would be more frightened than ever. I know a lady, now living, that read it fifty years ago, and every event predicted in it she saw fulfilled with the excepiton, of course, of the last two lines. If you will have a little patience until I recall the verses, I will give the entire prophesy to you." After a few moments reflection Mr. Churchill repeated the following:

"'Carriages without horses shall go,
And accidents fill the world with woe.

Around the world thoughts shall fly
In the twinkling of an eye.

Water shall yet more wonders do,
Now strange—yet shall be true.

The world upside down shall be,
And gold be found at the root of tree.

Through hills man shall ride
And no horse nor ass be at his side.

Under water man shall walk,
Shall ride, shall sleep, shall talk.

In the air men shall be seen
In white, in black, in green.

Iron in the water shall float,
As easy as a wooden boat.

Gold shall be found mid stone
In a land that's now unknown.

Fire and water shall wonders do,
England shall at last admit a Jew.

And this world to an end shall come
In eighteen hundred and eighty one.'"

"I can never believe it was written so many years ago, it's utterly impossible," exclaimed Belle.

"I have heard my aunt say," remarked Mrs. Singleton, "that when they were little girls they saw it written in an old manuscript in their father's library."

"'In the air men shall be seen in *white*, in black, in green,' I take it those are baloons Mr. Langdon," said Paul.

"I think not."

"What then?"

"Elevated railroads."

"But there is no *white* paint on the cars mingled with their red and green."

"You must make some allowance, Paul, for a poet's license," replied Mrs. Singleton, making the move to retire, and all withdrew to the library.

There was a bright wood fire burning, for the evening had grown damp and chilly. In addition to the lamps, two wax-candles stood lighted on the table and on the mantlepiece.

"I am going to have a song to-night," said Mrs. Singleton, joining Mr. Churchill and Mr. Langdon by the fire, and addressing the latter. "Don't rise; is it to be 'no,' again?"

"I shall sing any time you wish," Reuben replied, "but can't I also make a request of you? I am continually thinking of your last words since we entered

the hall; will you not explain them more fully to me?"

"The report is you're engaged!"

"I am not engaged, Mrs. Singleton," answered Reuben, gravely. "My thoughts rarely turn to England. I never loved when there. I never saw the woman I could love." Then, with much excitement in his voice, "What could have given rise to such a report? What foundation did it rest upon? And for what purpose was it fabricated?"

Mabel had never seen Reuben Langdon so moved. His face flushed, his eye kindled and flashed. She had thoroughly roused him.

"Not for the world," she thought, "shall I betray Belle," and answered, "what matters where it originated, Mr. Langdon; it certainly has done no harm."

"I don't know that," he replied; "falsehood always works harm. You remember those lines,

'Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive!'

Still, it is of no importance. Did you believe it?" And he looked tenderly and passionately into Mabel's eyes.

"I did until lately."

"Why not lately?"

She moved off; no answer seemed necessary, and Reuben walked over to the piano, opened it, and sat down and sang what his heart longed to tell her—"*Verlegenheit*,"

"I have a secret worth revealing,
And yet I know not what to say;
But ask me what this tender feeling,
My fond reply would alway,
I love thee dearly, thee alone!"

"I never heard," said Mr. Churchill, in a whisper to Mabel, "Langdon sing so well as he does to-night, and with such feeling. He has a mellow, rich voice, and throws much expression into it. What kind of a voice do you call it, Mabel—tenor?"

"I would rather listen than talk," replied Mabel, in a low tone.

Her reproof had its effect for a few moments, when he began again, "When does Belle Travers leave?"

"Next week."

"She has made a good long visit; are you getting tired of her?"

"No, George," she answered, hastily, "I invited her to stay with me three months."

"That's not answering my question."

"Well, then, I'm not tired of her, and shall very much regret her absence."

He whistled this time for a reply, but still could not be suppressed, and began again:

"You know Langdon is obliged to be in Boston next week, and will take Paul to Cambridge. I am so pressed with business I cannot get away."

Mabel gave up now, and, in despair, changed her seat

to the other side of the room where Paul and Katy sat, that she might enjoy the song she had requested. There was one more verse, and she gave her whole attention to it. The soft, low notes found their way into her heart and awakened strange sensations of memory and sadness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE company had all left. Mrs. Singleton and Miss Travers withdrew to their rooms, and Paul, who had decided to remain over night, took up his candle and sought his.

The fire had made the library warm and oppressive, and Reuben stepped out on the piazza for fresh air and exercise. The servant came and closed the blinds, put back the chairs, locked the back door, and was proceeding toward the front, when Reuben called out from the piazza:

"You can leave this door open, and I will secure it when I retire."

"Shall I put out the lights, sir?"

"Yes, and should I wish a candle, I will light one of the tapers upon the library table."

The house was now quite still. Every one, apparently, had retired to rest with the exception of Reuben. Left to his own thoughts, he took out a cigar, paced the piazza, and smoked. There was a soft, light breeze stirring among the trees, which gently played in his hair and passed over his heated brow, cooling, with its light touches, his excited but happy thoughts.

"Yes," he mused, "the secret of my wealth is known; I am now sought after, and compliments flow in as never before; yet, still, I had not even the presumption to hope that I could win the love of the only woman I ever tried to please, until to-night.

"There have been moments when a word, a look, unexpectedly given, would carry me away into dreams of endless happiness and bliss! But oh, how fleeting they were! For as quick as thought a cloud would pass over her face, and some word escape, to make me feel how utterly vain was the hope. But to-night there was light thrown upon her changing mood. Engaged! From whence came the idle rumor, and how long, in her eyes, have I been looked upon as belonging to another? A constant lover, to be sure, with my unwearied devotion to her!

"Mabel Singleton, you never could have believed it, or else you have thought me a consummate flirt, and I believe there were moments when you did. I have my suspicions—Belle Travers! Why that shake of the head? Am I indebted to you for this unwarrantable fabrication, and what motive had you?

"Engaged! Pshaw! What other woman could hold me in such thraldom, could so take possession of my whole being as Mabel Singleton did from the first moment my eyes beheld her?"

Again he mused on.—"Strange that her fears and

Elsie's have never been realized. Since I have been in this house, not an unusual sound have I heard, not even the screeching of the night owls have disturbed my repose." As if to give his thoughts the lie and verify their fears, Reuben now distinctly heard a slow, measured step pacing along the hall floor, as the step of one who walks wearily.

He had taken a seat very near to the open door that leads into the vestibule. He started, rose from his chair, and looked around. All was darkness. He walked softly to the library table, took out a match and lit a wax candle, and as cautiously and noiselessly as possible looked out into the passage, up and down, and listened anxiously.

Not a sound broke the stillness. He then went to the back door, from which direction he imagined the steps proceeded, and gently unlocked it. His light suddenly went out, and he was left in total darkness. There had been no wind, and his movement had been so quiet that he greatly marveled at it. Reuben then closed the door without a sound and locked it. Then he lit the candle, and, with a soft step, mounted the stairs to his own room, fearing to awaken or alarm needlessly any of the inmates of the house.

The lamp was burning as customary on this floor. Still and quiet was the aspect of everything around, and nothing was heard but the simultaneous ticking of the clocks throughout the house.

Reuben partly undressed and left his door ajar, ready to spring from his bed, should anything more unfold itself, and be on hand to grasp this would-be ghost or stern reality.

He extinguished his light which he afterwards regretted, and laid down and tried to sleep. The clock far down in the hall struck two, and wearied with tossing and listening, deep sleep at length stole his senses away.

He had not been sleeping more than an hour at most, when he was awakened by a slight touch on his shoulder and a gleam of light shot across his face.

"It is daylight," he thought, and rubbing his eyes, rose, and looked around. The blood ran cold in his veins, and all power of speech now forsook him. Before him stood a tall figure in white. She held a lighted candle in her hand, and some kind of fanciful looking veil was twisted in and out of her long dark hair, which hung down from the back of her head. Her eyes, which were of a very light color, looked misty and dead. She was very young, and the intense look of suffering in her face would have made the hardest heart ache. Stooping down, she stretched out one hand as if searching for something, while with the other she tightly grasped the candle she held.

At length finding voice, Reuben faltered out, "Who are you, and what do you want?"

Suddenly an unnatural fire gleamed from the eyes,

and coming a little closer, she hissed out between her teeth——

"I want my pin!" Then quickly flashing the light in his face, she turned and disappeared.

What direction she took, Reuben for a moment was too much stunned and confused to notice.

It scarcely took a moment for the whole transaction, and rising to follow her, he paused a moment in the hall to listen, and thought that he heard a retreating step on the story above, and voices whispering. He quickly moved in that direction.

On this floor a short distance from the head of the stairs, Reuben saw a door slightly ajar. He went to it, pushed it open—it was no time for ceremony—looked in, and saw two beds with a female figure reposing in each. In the smaller bed he thought he recognised the same colored hair he had seen a few moments ago, and the bed clothes looked slightly tossed.

"Has any one from this room been up, and walking around the house at this hour of the night?" he sternly demanded.

The answer came from a rough, ill-natured looking woman, with a coarse voice. "Faix, 'twould be betther thin, if the likes of yes returned to your own room, and left dacent women in theirs. Prowling round the house this time 'o night, no good can come of it."

"Be quiet," answered Reuben sharply, "and stop

making such a beastly racket. I've now no longer any doubt, and should these night walks, and visitations, continue, I shall expose you and that one in yonder bed to your mistress."

He said no more, but turned and walked softly down to Elsie's door and gently knocked. She rose and opened it.

"Have you been awake long, nurse?"

"About ten minutes, sir."

"What have you heard?"

"The old sounds again. It passes me."

"Do you think Mrs. Singleton is alarmed?"

"No, sir; she is a sound sleeper."

"Had you not better go to her door and knock? She may be undergoing great fear, and not have the courage to rise and inquire. The walking and whispering have been unusual to-night."

"My young mistress would never survive the fright of a knock at her door this time of night," and Elsie looked inquiringly at him.

"Then you feel sure she has not heard? But where's Robbie?" seeing only Katy in a little cot by Elsie's bed. Reuben began to be alarmed that he might have been spirited away.

"I always take him over to his mamma in the early part of the evening; he sleeps with her, sir."

"Elsie, what kind of a girl is Rhoda Hill?"

"Respectful enough," she replied, looking sharply at him. "What have you heard, sir?"

"Walkings and whisperings, such as you told me about. Say nothing of this, however, in the morning, as I think I can explain it away before your mistress becomes needlessly alarmed."

"No, sir."

Reuben went back to his room. It was still night. How he longed for the golden rays of dawn to burst forth and clear the mystery of the night away!

No band of soldiers or policemen, stationed at your gate, brings the reassurance that this glorious queen of morn does, when first she streaks with rosy red the far off mountain tops.

He was glad that Paul had slept so peaceably and quietly in the adjoining room.

"How he would have rejoiced to have been in the midst of the fun! as I am sure he would have termed it," thought Reuben, "and he may yet have an opportunity. But there was no time for arousing him; nor do I see the sense of unnecessarily depriving youth of their sleep."

Langdon was glad once more to seek his bed and find the repose he so much needed. He was late in rising naturally, and Paul had to rouse him several times from his heavy morning slumber.

Before descending to the breakfast room, Reuben cast

a quick glance around, hoping to detect among the servants that were sweeping and dusting the rooms, his midnight visitor; but he saw no tall, slight-looking girl, with heavy, dull eyes, and concluded that, if it was Rhoda Hill, she was studiously avoiding him.

He had not proceeded many steps, when missing his handkerchief, he turned and sought it on the bureau where he had left it. Passing out again, near his bed he saw something shining beneath it. He stooped down and picked up a small gold pin, which to his surprise, on examining, he found to be of great value. In the centre was a large diamond, surrounded by pearls. Reuben carefully placed it in his vest pocket.

"Surely," thought he, "light of some kind is beginning to break;" and regretted the necessity of being obliged to leave at eleven-thirty for New York, so anxious to begin as soon as possible his investigations. Still he thought it best to remain perfectly silent until a favorable opportunity opened.

When Reuben entered the breakfast room, he perceived at a glance that the ladies had been entirely unconscious of any unusual disturbance during the past night.

"Miss Travers," he inquired, "how about your presentiments of evil?"

"Oh," she replied, "I had foreshadowings of them."

"Indeed, in what shape?"

"As you entered I was telling Mrs. Singleton that I heard a quick step running up the third story stairs. But she insists upon it that my day thoughts were prolonged into dreams."

"Nothing more?"

"No, and what is a most unusual circumstance for me when once alarmed, I fell immediately asleep again!"

"That does not indicate a presentiment of very heavy evils in which we were all to be implicated, you remember."

"*Nous verrons.* I do not care however to discuss it with one so sceptical as you."

"What a dull rainy day," remarked Mrs. Singleton.

"How shall we worry through it," said Miss Travers. "Do, see how the wind blows and the rain beats against the window panes."

"Will you drive to the station?" inquired Mabel, addressing Reuben.

"I thought of walking, but if this rain continues, I will order John to bring round my light covered wagon."

"And return when?"

"About nine this evening."

"Mabel, I'm going to bundle up and venture out," cried Belle. "And what are you in such deep thought about?" turning to Reuben.

'Twas hearing the appellation, "Mabel,"—to Reuben, the sweetest name he had ever heard. But he answered,

"At your fearlessness in braving the storm," which was also interwoven in a vague sort of manner with his thought.

"Oh look, Kate," said Paul, "at the wind, blowing those trees all in one direction, and never turning round as much as to say 'good morning' to us."

"The wind is from the South," remarked Reuben, joining them. "See how those trees toss their branchy heads northwards? I always take a certain kind of wild delight, Miss Travers, in listening to the melancholy soughing of the wind."

"I think it is so sad to hear; I feel more like running away from the great roaring, that rushes so mercilessly through space," replied Belle.

"Perhaps we are effected by it according to our moods," suggested Mabel.

"Paul, let us watch those large masses of white clouds, chasing each other rapidly through the skies," said Katy. "I believe it is going to clear, don't you? I see a little blue sky."

"I often see elephants, lions, bears, steamboats, and lovely young girls in the clouds," returned Paul, and then in a low voice, "dashing young ladies, too, with fantastic head rigs and bright, red caps, like our friend over there," glancing at Belle.

"Hush, Paul," said Katy, "she will hear you, and I like her so much. Yesterday she cut a beautiful horse for Robbie out of white paper."

"But what is that strange looking structure on the top of her head?"

"They are very fashionable," answered Katy; "made out of gentlemen's silk handkerchiefs. Willy Wood gave her that one."

"Willy Wood, who is he?"

"The one that waltzed with her that night at your house—with a waxed moustache."

"Heavens!" said Paul, "how well I remember it. Hark, Katy, is that Robbie playing the banjo?"

All stood silent to listen. A few more cords were struck—then a slide down the stairs of both banjo and child—a heavy thump at the bottom was heard, and a scream from Robbie.

"Oh!" cried out Mrs. Singleton, with a rush to the hall. "Robbie, has fallen, Belle, with your banjo."

His screams were something beyond description. It did not seem possible that a child could have lungs to bring forth such a volume of sound.

Mrs. Singleton took him up in her arms, and Katy ran for arnica and water.

Miss Travers caught up her banjo and cooly touched a few chords to see if it had been seriously injured.

Elsie now appeared, followed by every servant in the house. Robbie held his hand tightly over his mouth allowing no one to touch or remove it. Mrs. Singleton looked pale, and evidently feared some of his teeth were

knocked out. Katy looked quite as white as her aunt, and Paul ran for the doctor.

"It's to my thinking he's kilt intirely," wailed the laundress. "Spake out, darlint, in your own swait nathural voice."

Her Irish brogue revealed her at once to Reuben, and she looked disconcerted when she saw him.

"Keep your thoughts to yourself," whispered Elsie, pushing her aside.

Mrs. Singleton looked up and said, "Don't press so closely around him. When he ceases to cry we shall know the extent of his injury. Katy," she continued, "run up-stairs and bring down a box of bon-bons from my mantlepiece."

The child at once heard the order, and looked up and asked, "How many are you going to give me?"

When the box was handed him, he crammed his hands full and began eagerly eating through his tears, without the slightest pain or difficulty. With the exception of a small cut on the side of his upper lip, which was perceptible to all present, there did not appear to be much the matter with him.

Reuben knew very little of children, but was assured by Elsie and Katie that the hurt was serious enough to have given rise to any amount of screaming.

Reuben was obliged to drive rapidly to the station, as Robbie's accident had delayed him some ten to fifteen

minutes. Once seated in the cars, he tried to collect his thoughts and unravel the mystery of the costly pin he had in his possession. He took it from his pocket to examine more closely, and if possible find a name, or initials, engraven thereon as a clue to the ownership. There was nothing.

It had occurred to him more than once that his nocturnal visitor was what they call a medium.

He had seen something of spiritualism but had no faith in it, and yet was often astonished at its inexplicable nature. He knew also there were a great variety of mediums.

Speaking, writing, knocking and impersonating. Probably she came under the last-mentioned head.

He concluded also, that whoever had the charge of his room, dropped the pin under his bed, either accidently or intentionally. He had seen two chambermaids at different times sweeping there. It was stolen property undoubtedly.

Then again another thought presented itself, but Reuben smiled at its absurdity. He had heard that spirits through mediums claim, that as you leave this world you enter the next, with the same strong propensities and feelings either for good or evil. Could the owner of this pin from the spirit world have such a just indignation at seeing her once loved jewel in the hands of menials, make use of Rhoda Hill as her medium in placing it

where it properly belonged—in the possession of the lawful inheritor?

Rhoda Hill was undoubtedly a dangerous character to dwell in Mrs. Singleton's house, or in any one's dwelling. And Reuben concluded that on his return,—this very evening, perhaps,—he would unfold his tale, and say where his suspicions fell. But finally decided daylight was better for investigation of this nature.

CHAPTER XV.

"I THINK the evening train must be in now, Mabel," remarked Belle, "it is a quarter to nine. I wonder Mr. Langdon does not make his appearance."

"Paul, I'm so glad you are going to stay with us to-night in case he does not return," said Mabel.

"Yes, it was too dreary to remain at home. I think mother and Aunt Lyddy will return from New York in the morning."

"What took them down?" asked Belle.

"Mother's Aunt is very ill and sent for them."

"Do you expect anything from her," continued Belle.

"I have never heard anything about it," answered Paul, shocked and indignant at her unfeeling question.

"Mabel, I must have some one in my room to-night, but I don't wish you to mention it to Reuben Langdon. He would only laugh at me, and I never could stand being made an object of ridicule."

"You have often been one in my estimation," thought Paul.

"I am losing faith in him, too," she went on. "I do not think he wears well."

How Paul eyed her!

"Very well," answered Mabel, "you can have Rhoda Hill. And I will have a cot brought down, or she can sleep upon the sofa. At any rate, give yourself no uneasiness, and I will attend to it at once." She touched the bell and gave the order.

"Is she the girl I've met once or twice in the nursery with those sleepy eyes?"

"Yes," replied Mabel. "She always has such a neat, tidy look. She will be just the one for you."

"Katy, give us some music," said Paul, who far preferred her playing to Belle's; "one of your sweet waltzes. It is still pouring," he continued. "What I call a black night or as dark as a pocket. No man can see his hand before his face, and the wind has kept up all day. Instead of subsiding as night draws on, it seems to increase in speed and fury. Why, cousin Mabel, it actually screams around the house!"

"Let it at least look cheerful within," said Mabel, slightly shuddering; and she ordered more wood, and placed two extra lights on the chimney piece.

"Mabel, do you like that cruel or Kensington stitch—whatever they call it?" asked Belle.

"Yes, it is very simple; I can teach it to you in a few moments."

"These slippers, I imagine, are to be embroidered in that manner. Will you look at them?" and Belle unfolded a clean white linen handkerchief, and displayed

them on the table. One slipper completely or nearly finished, as a guide and pattern.

"In the name of all that's wonderful," exclaimed Paul, "where did you get such a vul——" (Mabel shook her head at him), "such a bright, showy-looking pattern from?"

"Mabel, don't you admire those marigolds and peonys?"

"I do," ejaculated Mabel, suppressing the laughter in the depth of her pocket-handkerchief. "They are brilliant flowers growing in the open air."

"I understand you; but here you think them out of place, and in bad taste."

"To be sure, they are, Miss Belle. Make a nice distinction between the effect in a garden and on a man's toes! Who are they for?"

"That's telling, Paul," answered Mabel.

Belle threaded her needle, and took up the pattern; looked at it several times, and placed it a short distance from her to see the effect. Then she laid it upon the carpet, and gazed at it long and attentively.

"I have discouraged her with it," thought Mabel. "It was not kind. Belle," she exclaimed penitently, "all persons' tastes are not alike, and it may work up very handsomely."

"I have made up my mind to change them," replied Belle, in an aggrieved sort of manner.

"Not from what I've said," observed Paul.

"No, I see it myself. I have some taste left, thank you."

"What can keep Reuben Langdon," thought Mabel, as a little time piece on the table struck the half-hour of nine. "Could an accident have happened?" But her exaggerated forebodings came to an end in a sharp ring at the door.

"That's Mr. Langdon," cried Paul, and he ran to open it.

Reuben stood at the entrance of the door, "too cold and too wet," as he said, "to enter until he had changed his clothes."

"Shall I have tea for you?" called out Mabel.

"No; I have had every thing, thank you. The train was an hour behind time."

"I thought," said Belle, "there had been some trouble."

When Reuben returned to the library, he was dressed in a light English suit, which set off to advantage his handsome figure. His white collar, slightly turned at the ends, displayed a well shaped throat. His bearing was gentlemanly and quiet; and with that bright, genial smile which was his peculiar charm, he inquired, "how have you all enjoyed yourselves this stormy day?"

"They have missed you," answered Paul. "I know it just as well."

Mrs. Singleton and Miss Travers both laughed aloud.

"It could not have been more agreeably passed then, as far as I am concerned. I like to be missed," and Reuben looked at Mrs. Singleton, but met with no responsive glance from her. "On her high horse again," he thought—probably thinking Paul's remark sufficient encouragement for one night; and he drew up to the fire to warm his hands over the flame.

Miss Travers insisted upon his lighting a cigar; but he adhered to his old-fashioned ideas, now entirely exploded, in regard to smoking in the presence of ladies, and refrained.

"What detained the train?" inquired Paul.

"She shunted the track before we reached Poughkeepsie."

"Mr. Langdon," remarked Mrs. Singleton, "I'm afraid you have not had a mouthful to eat since dinner, and are not candid enough to admit it?"

"If you are going to call my candor in question, I've not."

Mabel hastened to ring the bell, and ordered at once a light supper to be brought to Mr. Langdon.

When it was announced, Reuben rose and looked expectantly towards her; but she made no move to rise and accompany him.

"It's rather hard to send a poor fellow off alone," he thought, as he heard no light step behind him. "Why

can't she give me a chance to say a few words to her, and what better opportunity has offered than this?" and Reuben sat down disappointed, and with no great appetite for the repast before him.

"Belle, will you go over and pour out Mr. Langdon's tea for him?" said Mabel, sounding her a little.

"Let him pour out his own tea, I shall not budge an inch," she retorted indignantly (perhaps jealously), "besides it is in your place, not mine. You are the mistress of this house."

Mabel was not opposed to hearing Belle set forth so eloquently her duty, and which well accorded with her own feelings. She was on the point of starting, when Paul, who had concluded from their conversation that Reuben was to be deserted by both, hastily threw down his book, which he had been reading, and exclaimed, "Cousin Mabel, I'm going over to keep Mr. Langdon company," and left the library.

Hearing a step approach, Reuben's face brightened; but hope vanished when Paul entered and took a seat beside him.

On his return to the library, he drew up his chair once more to the fire, entirely forgetful of the lateness of the hour, and looked forward at least to an hour or so of pleasant conversation with Mrs. Singleton, when, to his surprise and astonishment, she made the move to withdraw.

"Oh, do not leave," he exclaimed, in a disappointed tone. "Sit a little longer. 'Tis now the very witching time of night."

"It is after eleven," persisted Mrs. Singleton.

"A few moments more," he pleaded.

Miss Travers hesitated, Mabel was inexorable, and all rose and retired.

Paul had a great deal to relate to Mr. Langdon, when once they found themselves in their room.

"I've had a jolly time of it to-day, you may rest assured. We corked Katy's face and dressed her up as a Dandy. Placed her in the parlor, and then sent up to Belle Travers, Willy Wood's card! She flew to the glass, rearranged her hair, and then stopped at Cousin Mabel's door, and asked 'if she would do.' I stood behind the portiere to listen when she entered the drawing room. 'Good morning, Mr. Wood,' I heard her say. Katy was looking out of the window, turned and advanced towards her. Belle looked at her small gloved hands and then in her face, and I don't know how much farther it would have gone, (not much, interrupted Reuben,) but Katy burst out laughing. Belle laughed, too, and said it was a good joke, but I think she felt it. Mr. Langdon," he still went on, "she has been nervous and fidgety all day."

"What about?"

"Those presentiments."

"They still persue her, do they? What nonsense it is!"

"And she has got Rhoda Hill over there," pointing to Belle's room, "sleeping on a couch for protector!"

"Rhoda Hill—of all Protectors!"

"Why not?" answered Paul. "What are you so astonished about; and why that exclamation over poor Rhoda Hill?"

"Paul, I cannot undress to-night. There may be trouble in that room before many hours have passed, and there may not be. I am not going to risk it, however, aud shall be prepared. You have heard of mediums? Rhoda Hill is one, and not only that, but my supposition is, that at times she is deranged."

Langdon then related what he had heard and seen.

"Mighty man!" cried Paul, "I for one, am not going to sleep in my room alone this night. I am trembling from head to foot now." And he crept into Reuben's bed. "Nor shall I close my eyes either, I'm so afraid of missing the sport."

"You will not find much sport in it," returned Reuben. "However, take all the sleep you can, and I promise to call you should anything occur."

Langdon closed his door, sat down and took up a book to read; but the words on the page conveyed no meaning to his mind. He threw the volume down, rose and lit a cigar, then throwing himself upon a couch pre-

pared to while away the time by smoking. He looked over in Paul's direction, and notwithstanding his expressed inability "to close his eyes for the night," perceived he was in a somnolent condition, alike insensible to smoke or ghosts.

"Mabel," said Belle, as they walked towards her room, "I forgot to ask you this morning, were you hurt at my not showing more feeling when Robbie fell?"

"No. What nonsense, Belle. I was so taken up with Robbie. I most assuredly thought you had acquitted yourself with all propriety," and Mabel laughed.

"I am so accustomed to sister Nan's little devils; I knew he was not much hurt. Look, there's Rhoda Hill! She has anticipated me; how late can it be?"

"After twelve. How strangely she sleeps," whispered Mabel, "with her head so buried in the clothes and turned towards the wall. But you are all right now, Belle, and as usual I will leave the doors connecting our rooms by this closet, open."

"Yes," answered Belle, "but my matches have disappeared. However, I shall not require them to-night."

Better have them. There they are on the mantlepiece," said Mabel, and then added, "any thing else wanted?"

"No, thanks."

"Are you sure you have everything?"

"I'm all right. Good night."

"Good night," said Mabel, and took up her candle and retired to her own room.

"Let me give one look at my darling Robbie first," she thought, and moved over to his little crib before extinguishing her light. Mabel smiled, as she looked at his saucy face. "You sweet thing," she murmured, "with all your obstinacy and wilfulness, what a darling you are! No, my baby, no. You alone have all your mother's love," and she took him in her arms and blew out the light.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE first thing that awaked Mabel was hearing her name called in a sort of half smothered, suppressed tone.

"Mabel, Mabel, come!"

Mabel sprang from her bed and hastily threw on her dressing gown and slippers. Her first thought was to touch a bell that communicated with the nursery, and which brought Elsie at once to Robbie. Then she hurried to Belle's room. It was utter darkness there, and feeling her way to the mantlepiece, she ran her hand over it, touched a match box and lit a candle. Then turning saw Belle sitting up in her bed with a blue flannel sacque on, and her face as white as the sheet around her. All color had left her lips, and her hands were as cold as in death.

"Oh, what is it? what is it?" whispered Mabel, shaking with fear.

"There has been a tall, female figure leaning over me for some time," murmured Belle, in a voice that showed all power of speech was waning.

"Dreaming dear," faltered Mabel, soothingly.

"I tried to say 'go away,' but had no voice, then

with a supernatural effort called your name and you came."

"Had you been awake long?"

"Yes, some strange, unnatural sounds awoke me. Then I heard my basin and pitcher thrown over, and saw a dark figure slowly moving towards my bed. There! I hear them now!" and they both screamed.

Reuben had roused Paul on first hearing Elsie's step, as she crossed the hall to Mrs. Singleton's room. They stood awaiting the summons which now came as the screams escaped their lips. They rushed over to Miss Traver's door, and excitedly and nervously knocked. The door was opened by Mrs. Singleton, who stood trembling and pale before them, and Miss Travers uttered in a faltering voice——

"Thank Heaven! but oh, listen, listen!" and silence fell on all.

"Sharp raps now came in quick succession on the foot board, followed by sounds like splittings or ineffectual efforts to tear the wood asunder. Phosphorescent lights of pale greenish colors flitted around the room, and over the heads of all present, giving to their faces a ghastly unnatural look.

"O," cried Mrs. Singleton; "let us ask for Divine guidance and protection."

And when their voices rose in prayer with, "Our Father who art in Heaven," the sounds on the foot board rapped time to the words that were uttered.

No one but Reuben had paid any attention to Rhoda Hill, who had risen and sat at the foot of her cot. He recognized her at once by her slight figure and dull heavy look. She appeared perfectly motionless, with her eyes cast down, looking steadily on the floor; and from time to time Reuben observed a spasmodic twitching or jerking of her left arm.

"Rhoda," he said, "come here; perhaps you can throw some light on all this?"

"What, Rhoda Hill!" exclaimed Belle, and all eyes turned to look at her. "That poor girl has had nothing to do with it!"

At this moment a coarse Irish voice called out," Rhoda Hill, come away wid ye, at onct, darlint."

"That's the woman I stumbled over in the hall," whispered Paul. "She was listening outside the door."

"I can't," the girl called back, "they won't let me."

"We have not kept you Rhoda," said Mrs. Singleton, "go."

She shook her head, "I don't mean any of you. Ask questions, will you?"

"What shall we ask?" inquired Paul.

"Ask if there is a message for any one present," at length answered Mr. Langdon.

The sounds now came vigorously and rapidly, as if rejoiced that the difficulty might be reached.

"'Three raps for yes, one for no, and five for the al-

phabet," said Rhoda, desperately, and as one who had given up all further attempt at concealment. She ran on with the alphabet, a, b, c, a, b, c. Suddenly stopping at M; and taking it up again, a, b, c, a, b, c, until the name of Mary Denver was given, when Mrs. Singleton started and uttered a slight exlamation.

"Did you know her?" exclaimed Paul.

"Oh, yes."

The raps came louder as if indignant at the interruption.

"What are you here for?" demanded Reuben.

"The diamond pin drew me," was spelt out.

At this, Rhoda Hill covered her face with her hands, and burst out into a long hysterical laugh.

"Oh, how frightful," said Miss Travers, and Mrs. Singleton turned pale with horror, and Paul drew a little closer to Reuben.

"Rhoda, for the love of our Blessed Lady," called out again the voice in suppressed fury, "if a word more laves your lips, I throw you off of my hands intirely. The divil take the American blood in that's ye." And she rushed in shaking her fist in the faces of all present, and carried Rhoda off bodily in her arms.

* * * * * * *

"You've passed a strange night and I'm afraid you suffer," said Reuben, turning to Mrs. Singleton. "Had you not better go and seek some rest?"

"How late is it?" she inquired.

"Quarter past four."

"I'm afraid she will come out again."

"Do not be troubled; I will take good care of that."

"Had we not better," said Paul, "go to her room and tie her fast to the bed post?"

"And have your sport yet?" remarked Reuben.

"I fear her return too," said Belle, still trembling.

"Had you ever seen anything of the kind before?" asked Paul of his cousin.

"No, dear, and I never wish to again."

"Mabel, I dare not remain alone one moment. You surely would not leave me?"

"No, indeed, Belle; you've endured enough for one night, and I think you have born it bravely. I was afraid at one time you would have swooned away with fright."

"Explain about the pin; do, cousin Mabel; that surpasses all."

"Oh, not now, Paul; wait for daylight."

"Little do they dream," thought Reuben, "it is in my vest pocket."

"Mabel, can I sit in your room? I shall never enter this one again at night, and I'm really shivering from the cold as much as fright."

"We are all going over to the nursery, and Elsie will have a bright blazing fire there for us," replied Mrs.

Singleton. "It cannot be more than an hour from sunrise, and I do not think any of us can close our eyes again. We are too much excited."

Reuben was the first to enter the breakfast room, and then it was long after ten. Elsie was reading a little story to Robbie by the fire. She was an old family servant, as is known, and all felt privileged to converse freely with her.

"I know all about it, Mr. Langdon," she said, rising from her chair and dropping a curtesy.

"About what?" asked Robbie.

"Hush, dear. And I stood at the nursery door and listened. Mrs. Singleton also told me a good deal this morning. It passes me!"—Elsie's usual exclamation of horror. "But it had to come; it had to come!"

"You have known then about Rhoda Hill?"

"Yes, sir; that she was a queer-acting girl, but not last night's kind. I told my mistress time and again, how the chairs and benches would roll over without a helping hand from her; and thumps would come under the table. But those she kept mighty quiet to herself. My mistress never thought a thing about it; but said that she had learned some tricks to amuse Robbie. And he was, bless his heart, greatly taken by them. She was a quiet, nice-spoken girl. Very sweet-tempered, too."

"Who was Mary Denver?"

"Miss Mary Denver? She was a first cousin of Mrs. Singleton's. Her mother's niece. A poor, sickly young lady that died in this house. Mr. Singleton, my master, never took to her. She whined, so he said. And particularly after she had lost a very valuable breast-pin that cost a thousand dollars and even more! It was all she had poor thing—left her by her great grandmother, and I did feel sorry enough when she lost it. She had written on a little slip of paper, that at her death it was to be left to Mrs. Singleton, whom she just about idolized."

"Who has the paper?"

"My mistress. My master and myself, were called in as witnesses, and my master signed the 'will,' as she termed it. He used to say to her, 'You would be far better off, Mary, if you loved your God as much as you do that gew-gaw!' It was not long after this that she died, and my master always maintained, it was the loss of her pin that killed her."

"You all look brighter than I expected to find you," exclaimed Reuben, as the ladies and Paul now entered.

"Mr. Langdon, the scenes we witnessed last night were a true representation of what they call Spiritualism, were they not?" inquired Miss Travers.

"It did, indeed, look very much like what I have fancied it, although I had never seen such a peculiar phase of it before."

"What is your opinion of it?" asked Mrs. Singleton.

"I do not think it of God," answered Reuben; "but how far the medium is concerned in controlling it, is beyond my knowledge."

"Do you think the Bible condemns it?" inquired Paul.

"Yes, you know it is said that Manasseh, the thirteenth king of Judah, dealt with familiar spirits, and wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord. Moses forbade any species of divination, as prying into the future clouds the mind with superstition. And because it would have been an incentive to idolatry.

"But God allowed the witch of Endor to call up Samuel," remarked Paul.

"It does seem as if the spirit of Samuel was permitted for the purpose of declaring the doom of Saul," returned Mr. Langdon, "and yet when Saul said, 'Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit,' she answered, 'Thou knowest what Saul hath done; how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land. Wherefore then layeth thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die,'—showing the light it was held in in those days."

"The penalty was death, I think," said Paul.

"Then you think this is the same thing as familiar spirits and wizards, they had in olden times?" asked Belle.

"I do," replied Reuben.

After the waiter had left the room, Mr. Langdon turned to Mrs. Singleton, and said, "Do you recognize that pin?" and drew from his pocket the costly diamond.

Mabel's face became scarlet, then pale. She took it from his hand and exclaimed, "where did you find it? How did it come into your possession? I recognize it at once. What a mystery the whole transaction has been; who can explain it!"

Reuben then related what had taken place the night before.

"And had I known," he said, "in time, that Rhoda Hill was to have been an occupant of Miss Traver's room, I would have revealed the facts at once. I only withheld them, fearing a night's disclosure would have given unnecessary alarm."

Mrs. Singleton then related the history of the pin, which in substance was pretty much the same as Elsie had told Mr. Langdon an hour earlier.

"What do you conclude from all the circumstances?" asked Mabel, addressing Reuben.

"That Rhoda's aunt, (the laundress, I believe), or some member of her family stole the pin. Having reached Rhoda's knowledge, it had so dwelt upon her mind as to cause partial insanity; and that also she is possessed of an evil spirit, and is now what is modernly

called a medium. I can solve it in no other manner. I believe the poor girl strictly honest, and placed the pin under my bed that it might eventually fall into the rightful owner's hand."

Rhoda and her aunt were now summoned and dismissed. The latter all submissiveness, calling it "Rhody's night mare." Neither of them, of course, had ever seen or heard of the pin.

"I have no fault to find with you, Rhoda," said Mrs. Singleton, and you may *believe*, you have no power to control these evil spirits; but I think with great effort you can in a measure overcome them. Of course we are not desirous of having the scenes of last night repeated."

"I know it," cried the poor girl, and overcome by her feelings she broke down and bust into tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAUL ruled it with a pretty high hand, being his last week home. Aunt Lyddy would watch his every movement and run at the slightest wish expressed.

"Remember," he would say, "you won't have me much longer,"—words that would send the tears to her eyes, and her hands to her pockets.

And Paul who knew too well the effect, would throw his arms around her neck and cry out:

"You dear, good, old soul!" and give her a loving kiss.

For hours they would both stand over the half-packed trunk, folding and unfolding, putting in, and pulling out —Aunt Lyddy exclaiming at every article she took up, "Paul, are you sure you have all you want?"

"All, but the red socks, Aunty." And poor Aunt Lyddy would look as conscious and bashful over it as a young girl.

"I want you to keep up the last day on mother's account," said Paul, with tears gathering in his eyes. "And Aunt Lyddy, I have bought this little trifle for her. Do you think she will like it?" And he unfolded from a paper a small russian leather box containing all

the necessary implements of sewing. "When would be the best time to give it to her?"

"Now," said Aunt Lydia, reflecting that remembrance and love shown at the last moment only augments the sorrow of parting.

"Have Katy Singleton down often and talk to her about me; will you, Aunty?" and feeling a little agitated—he scarcely knew why—Paul caught up Aunt Lydia's knitting bag and was packing it away in his trunk, when she cried:

"Look out, Paul; what are you putting in your 'Box?'" calling it by the English appellation which she never gave up.

"Oh," said Paul, taking it out, and giving it a toss over on the bed. "Why did you hand it to me, then?"

Aunt Lydia had no remembrance of doing so, but judiciously said nothing.

"Will a dozen shirts be enough to start with?"

"I should think so," answered Aunt Lydia. "In my days six were thought sufficient, with dickys in addition."

"Dickys," exclaimed Paul, laughing. "What an outlandish name!"

Paul and his Mother rarely spoke of the parting, although the thoughts of each were often busy with it. To him it would come by fits and starts. But with her it was ever present. She would dwell upon his affection

for her; the happinesss and love they had together, until the tears would start to her eyes, and she would feel as if she could not let him go—a longing to go to him and hold him back, and tell him how dear he had been to her these many years, and how bright he had made life to her.

She saw the preparations going on, and dared not too often be present, lest her feelings giving way might cause him pain.

Mr. Churchill had his moments of depression, too, for Paul was to him the pride of his life, the apple of his eye.

"What are we going to do, Ellie, without the boy?" And Mrs. Churchill never found voice to answer.

At last the hour of parting came.

Reuben remained outside in the carriage, not wishing to intrude on their last moments with Paul.

It was the first day of November, a cold, clear, bright morning. The horses stamped and neighed eager to be off, and Reuben waited in momentary expectation of seeing the front door open. They came at last—the whole family. Paul and his mother hand in hand, followed by Aunt Lyddy, carrying his bag, and his father his overcoat.

Reuben felt touched at the sight, for they were all trying to look cheerful through their tears, and he jumped out, took Mrs. Churchill's hand in his and whispered in her ear:

"I shall take the very best care of him."

No reply came; she feared to trust her voice.

Paul first kissed Aunt Lyddy who made no effort to control her feeling. Then his father, who in a voice tremulous with feeling, said:

"Gold bless you, my boy, and keep you safe till we meet again."

The last kiss was for his mother. She threw her arms around him and whispered words of love and hope—took his hands and held them—then gently disengaged herself and stepped back from the carriage, and so mid tears and farewells and waving of handkerchiefs Reuben and Paul drove off and left their homes behind them.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Aunt Mabel, how lonely it is since they have all left; and don't you think it strange Paul has not written a word to me?"

Mabel went on embroidering and did not see the mist that was gathering in Katy's eyes.

"You know, dear, he said he would not feel in any kind of mood to write until he felt assured he was going to pass."

"How long does that take?"

"It depends, I think, upon the number of students that are undergoing examination. Mr. Langdon was to have returned this afternoon; he may be in this evening, and will bring us word of Paul. Perhaps a letter for you, Katy."

Paul with his sympathetic, loving ways had thrown much joy and happiness into Katy's young life since they had been so constantly together the last few months, and her face seldom now wore its sad expression. A bright, hopeful look had come into her ever beautiful eyes.

"Katy, you miss Paul very much?"

"Oh, yes."

After a few moments silence Mabel went on. "Do you like Mr. Langdon?"

"Almost as much as Paul."

"What do you like about him?"

"He has always been so kind to me."

"In what way?"

"You know Aunt Mabel he only taught us for three months (vacation came so soon), and twice during that time I was cross and impatient and would not say my lesson."

"What did he do?"

He put the book down and said, "Never mind, Katy; and then began talking so kindly to me."

"About what?"

"That each one of us daily exercises an influence over those around us for good or for evil. Therefore any little word thoughtlessly or unkindly spoken leaves its pain. But a kind word, a sympathetic word, lifts us from our cares and troubles, and we often carry the sun-light of it through life."

"I am sure he will be kind to my Robbie," thought Mabel. "Love him, bear with him, humor him in all his little wayward whims." "What else Katy?"

"And if we conquer ourselves we set an example to others."

"What lesson did you take from it?"

"That I had hurt his feelings and set a bad example to Paul. When he ceased, Aunt Mabel, he took up the book, and scarcely able through my tears to see him or even hear him, I once more made the attempt and recited my lesson; and when finished, he said, well done, Katy."

* * * * * * * * * *

Mabel looked radiantly beautiful. She had taken particular pains with her toilet this evening. A rich black silk with soft laces made a white mist at throat and wrist. It was drawing near the hour when Mr. Langdon had promised to come, and she knew this evening they would be left alone and that words of love would be spoken, she longed yet dreaded to hear.

"Aunt Mabel, isn't it near my bed time?"

"Yes, dear; but if you like you can sit up a little longer."

Katy had begun a mitten for Robbie and was anxious to have Elsie show her how to narrow, so she replied.

"I would rather go now, Aunt Mabel."

"What, Katy, running off so soon!" cried Reuben, as

he entered the hall and saw Katy half way up the stairs. "Don't you want your letter?" and he threw it to her, not feeling particularly anxious she should return to the library for it.

Mrs. Singleton rose at his entrance and put out her hand.

Reuben had to repress the delight he felt at seeing her again. He had almost forgotten for the moment that there had been nothing explicit between them; no formal engagement, and that he had no right to offer her anything more than an ordinary salutation.

They were now alone, and Reuben sat for a few moments watching her embroider, as she inquired, with animated interest, of Paul. She had a beautiful hand, not too small, but well shaped, and the skin fine and white as marble.

"I seldom see you with a needle," he at length said, taking up a small piece of crimson silk she had been tracing flowers upon.

"I am not fond of sewing as a general thing, but Christmas is not far off, and Katy has expressed a wish for a sachet; they have always a peculiar attraction for little girls."

"Have they?" answered Reuben, thinking more of her lovely eyes and expression than of what she was saying.

A long pause followed.

"Katy left a word that these scattered letters will form," she said, placing them in a line on the table. "Can you aid me in finding it out?"

Reuben drew his chair closer to hers. Something retained him bending there. His head very near hers, his hand near hers, too. He felt the blood stir about his heart and rise warm to his cheek. Instead of looking up at once with a displeased look, her eye rested on his hand, and a warm blush suffused her face.

Carried away with his feelings, Reuben murmured in her ear, "Mabel, do you love me?"

"Yes," said she slowly, gently, the blush that had half subsided returning.

He gently pressed her to him, when suddenly she drew back, and that indescribable shade he had so often seen, passed like a shadow over her face.

"Speak, darling," he said, "what is it you fear? You know that I love you, have loved you from the first. You are all the world to me, I could not live without your love. I have listened for your step, been thrilled at your voice! Do not avert your head; say again and again that you love me!"

Quick as lightning the thought flashed upon him, "Can you think I will not love your child, darling? Care for him as I would for you; love him as my own."

She turned, looked timidly up into his face, and Reuben saw the dark eyes were full of love and trust.

He took her in his arms and passionately kissed her over and over again, and Mabel Singleton and Reuben Langdon were one!

Miss Travers married Mr. Willy Wood, her little waxed moustached partner of the mazy dance, and settled down a model wife. Reuben has now been married five years, and knows what it is to live entirely for and with what he loves best on earth.

Robbie is nine years old; a little loving boy and pupil still. Katy Singleton has just attained her seventeenth year and grown into lovely womanhood, not what the world would call beautiful, but far more attractive. The bright golden masses of hair no longer hang carelessly down her back as in her girlhood days, but are wound in rich braids around her head.

Her complexion is still pale. Her mouth rich and full, and eyes of deepest tenderness. Reuben often exclaims:

"Can it be possible it is the little 'Miss Singleton' I first had the pleasure of meeting five years ago!"

Paul has returned from college, and, from his high intellectual cast of mind, stood first in nearly all his classes. He has the same warm, loving nature that endeared him to all, and Reuben's heart still goes out to him as it did that first June morning when he watched his young, bright face from the school-room window.

He had always confided to Mr. Langdon his love for

Katy Singleton, and this beautiful August evening, as Reuben and his wife passed "under the oaks," he turned and said to her:

"It will not be long before there is another wedding at Oakland."

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